

IN · THE · RIFT
OF · THE · ROCK

EDGAR · L · VINCENT



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WITHOUT SOUND OF HAMMER

In the Rift of the Rock

BY *Edgar L. Vincent*
EDGAR L. VINCENT



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IN
MEMORY OF
MY FATHER

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CHAPTER I

THE ROCK THAT WAS SMITTEN

GRIM and forbidding, the Rock of Horeb lifted its head against the far-off sky. If it had one day been fused in the fire of God's great crucible, it could not have been more red nor yet more flinty. Was it, indeed, a fragment struck by the hand of the Almighty from Sinai and hurled into the plain below at some time in the dim and misty past, there to await the hour when Jehovah might use it to his honor and glory? Who would have thought that Horeb's Rock could ever be the means in God's hands of saving a people from the awful fate of death by thirst?

Very little of beauty did the people see in the rock as they stood in its shadow that day. Their only thought now was that they and their little ones were dying for lack of water.

Have you ever known what it is to wander about in the woods for days without a drop of water? If you have, you remember that every vein in your body seemed to run with

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fire. You could no longer speak above a whisper, so parched was your throat. The faster you hurried on in your quest for water, the more thirsty you became. O if you might but know the joy of coming to some rippling stream or crystal fountain! Even a hollow in the ground, if holding no more than a cupful of the blessed water you needed, would seem like a God-given gift. Flowers nodded along the way; you passed them with scarce a glance. Their fragrance drifted up to you out of the deep bed of moss in which they grew; but you were unaware of it. What was such perfume to you now! You were perishing of thirst!

On a hot summer night a man says he walked over a battlefield. The day had been red with carnage. Here, there, everywhere lay soldiers by the thousand, wounded, aching in every limb; but it was not of their wounds these sufferers were thinking. "Water! Water! give us water—just a drop of water!" This was the fearful cry which went up from a hundred lips, repeated again and again until the visitor could endure it no longer, for he had not a spoonful to give. With his fingers hard in his ears to shut out the awful cry he fled beyond the reach of voice.

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So Israel was famishing for drink. Long since had they left behind them the bitter waters of Marah.

"Give us water that we may drink!" Over and over again rang the appeal in the ears of Moses, until it seemed to him he heard it night and day, waking or sleeping. "Wherefore is it that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" "Give us water!" they demanded.

It must be that Moses had gone with that bitter wail of the people many times to God; for Jehovah was ever his refuge and strength in time of trouble. At last, as if his very heart were breaking for sympathy, he cries: "What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me!" Then, listening as if hope had quite died out of his heart, the great leader heard God's voice, issuing that strange command:

"Go! . . . Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb."

SMITTEN BY THE ROD

How far was it that Moses led the people that day? We may not know. Surely, it was far enough to tax the fast-failing strength of

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the mothers bearing their little ones. Could there have been any, however stout of limb he once might have been, who did not stagger with weakness long before the command came to halt? The halt? Where? Surely, not face to face with that barren rock! Pity them if they now lost all hope and gave way to bitterest reproach against the patient servant of God! They were at best only children, those men and women just out of the brickkilns of Egypt. They had dreamed of a sunny land, flowing with milk and honey. Never were they to know hunger or thirst in that blessed country beyond the floods of the Jordan. Often in the silent watches of the night, as they lay them down in the dust of the desert, their hearts had turned away to the green fields and the vineyards heavy with the purple grapes of the land of promise. How sweet would be the fruits of that delectable country! Were meadows ever more green, did ever pastures lie more sunny than those of that home which was to be when at last the weary miles had slipped on out of sight and they had reached the farther shore of the river which rolled between them and their golden fancies?

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As long as these visions buoyed them up, what cared they for stony road or aching feet? There might be sore lack of home comforts now; on the morrow all this would be forgotten, for their eyes would rest on the hills beyond the swelling tide. There, they would know only plenty! There home and joy and peace forever and forever! So they could plod on uncomplainingly, led by the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day. With glad hearts they heard the summons of their leader when at break of day the ark set forward. "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee!" Joyfully they could march through the day, camping when night let down its curtains and they heard the last call from the lips of Moses, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

But here was nothing more than the rock of Horeb, stern, cold, forbidding. What a mockery of hope! How terrible the awakening from the visions and dreams of the happy land of Canaan!

Only the rock of Horeb? O, Israel, say it not! Soon thou art to have fresh proof of the love and the mercy and the power of

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Jehovah! Somewhere in the valley, when speaking to his chosen commander, God had said, "Take with thee . . . thy rod, where-with thou smotest the river, take in thy hand and go."

"Thy rod." Where did Moses get that bit of wood? Was it not one day in the long ago, when he was caring for the sheep at the back side of the desert? It was a day to make one long for the shade of a friendly tree. The sun beat down with stifling heat. The path taken by the sheep was hard and stony. Great beads of sweat stood out on the brow of the shepherd. Then he caught sight of a wisp of a sapling. It must have had just the bend near one end that the crook of a watcher of sheep would need to pull the wayward lamb back to its fellows when it had strayed out of the path in search of a choice tuft of clover. And Moses cut it and turned the stick into a staff. Sitting on a mossy bank all alone, he trimmed away the little branches which grew along the body of the slender sapling. Carefully—for at last he had learned the blessed quality of patience—he pruned and smoothed the knots, until at last it pleased him. He used it to lighten the way over the

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toilsome footpaths and it helped him to climb the rugged steeps. More than one little lambkin of the flock felt the tug of that crook about its neck, gently drawing it back to safety by the side of the mother ewe. And yet, it was only a shepherd's staff!

Then one day, when the fullness of time had come with God, and the shepherd was to leave forever behind the sheepcote, and the days at the back side of the desert were to be no more, that he might give his servant the greater work of shepherding his people, Jehovah touched that wisp cut from the wayside bush and it became the Rod of God! Moses might still lean upon it when the way was long and his limbs tired, but now it was to be consecrated to a higher purpose. Laid upon the water of the river at the command of God, the tide flowed back and the people went over dry-shod. Cast on the ground, it became a wriggling serpent. Held high in the hand of Moses, it brought the army of Jehovah to victory. What new and startling use is to come to the rod to-day?

“Smite the rock!”

Smite the rock? What could be the meaning of that command? Could anything of

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good come from such an action? Surely, it must be that God is playing with the miseries of his people. Ah! but a thought so shameless as that never came to the mind of Moses. He knew the Holy One of Israel too well to doubt that some wonderful manifestation of his power was coming. Quickly the conviction was changed to certainty.

“There shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.”

Water from the rod-smitten rock! O blessed word—promise of God himself! Promise made upon the warrant of Him whose word never faileth! Did Moses look up at the smooth side of that fire-burned rock and wonder how it could possibly be that from it should spring a single drop of moisture? Was ever a task like that set for living man? Ah! the man of God never did it. He did not wonder—he knew! Already by faith he saw the soul-refreshing waters gushing from the bosom of the stone! And he lifted the Rod of Jehovah strong, sure, in faith believing.

“And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel!”

The days of thirsting were all over now! Out of the cleft of the rock came gurgling

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forth a great stream of living water, sweet, pure, cooling the fever and bringing back hope to the dying wanderers of the wilderness! Saved by water from the rock, the rock touched by the hand of God!

IN MY HAND AND THINE!

Have we not all quenched our thirst at fountains opened out of the very heart of the rock at the touch of a rod to which God has given power?

Once we too had our dreams of a home beyond some Jordan. How we longed to be of service in the bringing in of the Kingdom! We pleaded for power. It seemed to us it was a plea from which God would not turn away. Would it not be to his honor and glory that our petition should be granted? Had we not prayed over it until tears wet the pillow night after night? Still no sign. The heavens seemed like brass and we were dying of thirst. This way and that we seemed to be led, always over red-hot sands and under blistering skies. The flowers along the way faded. The leaves on the trees withered. Hope wavered in our hearts. We had been led only to the flinty rock of Horeb!

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Only there? Have we, then, forgotten the fountain opened in the desert? Hark! What is it God is whispering to us?

“What is that in thine hand?”

“Only a rod, my Father!” Weakly the answer comes, wrung from lips that are pale with doubt. And yet when he has bidden us “Take it and smite the rock,” out of the riven rock have gushed great rivers of water; the most sanguine hope has been realized, the longing fully satisfied. It was the very last thing we would have thought of using. We had been thinking of other things than that simple staff. What was it but a stick cut by the side of the road? It could have no better use than to help us up the mountain path. So we thought and we had passed by the very thing God meant to make most helpful in his service.

So it is that gifts of mind or heart or soul may be blessed and turned into instruments for bringing water out of the solid rock. Just when we are most disheartened, when all our effort seems like a pitiful travesty, listening to God’s voice we may use some little heart-treasure, some endowment of mind, to win for those we love the Water of Life!

THE ROCK THAT WAS SMITTEN

Is it only a little gift of song? Sing with all thy soul, O, friend of mine, and let me sing with thee! Is it nothing better than the ability to turn a good straight furrow or to run a beautiful seam across the garment in thine hand? Hold the plowshare firm and true; push the needle through with steady hand. Fain would I hold but the tip of one handle, or the selvedge of the cloth, glad that such may be my part in the service, and sure that God will honor it; for know thou that God will see to it that the harvest will grow golden yellow on the top of thy furrow. Thy seam will be threaded through and through with beauty, beauty in thine own life and glory in the life of another. Are all the cords but one in thine harp broken by life's overstrain? Strike that one string lovingly and without a doubt in thine heart. Its music shall surely find its way into some sinner's heart. Speak the kindly word! It shall win some soul for Jesus! For the rod-smitten rock never yet failed to send out its healing waters when God spake the word.

CHAPTER II

THE NEST IN THE SIDE OF THE ROCK

YOU never would have looked for a nest in such a place as that. Knee-deep in the meadow where the grass grows sweet and rich in its fragrance you have found many a cozy place where the little friends of the feather have tucked away their nests. From more than one pasture bush, close-set about with thorns though it was, you have caught sight of bare-headed birdlings swinging, safe from soft-footed foes and hawk-eyed pirates of the sky. It did not surprise you to discover them in even so forbidding a place as that. It was worth while to stop and pull aside the sharp-pointed branches of the thorn-bush to peep in upon the family of wee ones.

But here, far up on the side of the hill, just where you never would have thought of looking for it, by the side of a beetling rock, a bird has built her nest. You might not have seen a trace of it, had not the mother bird,

THE NEST IN THE SIDE OF THE ROCK

scared by the footfall of the approaching stranger, fluttered out of her nest when you caught hold of a low-hanging bush by which to pull yourself up to the top of the cliff.

Here it was, however, with its heart-shaped basket of hair, gathered on many a day of gleanings through forest, field and glen, its coarser fibers shot through and through with threads of silken beauty, torn from tree and shrub and mossy bank, all so delicately lined with softest wool, picked up where the sheep lie in the heat of the day. You know she does all this in anticipation of the day when the speckled eggs will be gone. Only God and the mother bird know the secret of those broken eggshells and the nestlings which come in their place. He furnishes the wool, while she gathers it up and weaves it into downy quilts for the little ones she loves. For a moment you stand there looking in upon that mystery, and then you creep softly down, as if from some heart-treasure too sacred to be touched or even looked upon by one like you.

As you turned your unwilling feet to go by another way to the summit of the rock, you fell to wondering why the mother bird sought

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that lonely place as the home for her birdlings. Down yonder in the meadow the sun was shining and the flowers nodding everywhere. The air was soft. A thousand songsters were fairly splitting their throats in songs of cheer and good will to the world. Up here you might listen an hour and not catch a single bird note, save only the frightened chirp of the bird you just now scared from her nest. Only now and then a ray of sunshine fell between the thick leaves overhead to warm the nest by the side of the rock. Always is the light dim there, and the only sounds the whisperings of the branches and the music of the rippling brook down yonder at the foot of the cliff.

But up here the old bird knows she and her wee ones will be safe. Ah, yes, up here is safety. Where is the hawk with eyes keen enough to find the nest in the cleft of the rock? Even should any cruel four-footed hunter of the forest suspect the presence of the bird watching so faithfully up yonder, by no means could he set his claws deep enough into the face of that steep to draw himself as high as that nest is. Here she might sit and wait the hour of God's unfolding secret with calm-

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beating heart. She and her little brood are safe, sheltered by the rock!

“STRONG IS THY DWELLINGPLACE”

Yes, “strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock.”

Away down, in the land of Midian in the days when Moses was sitting at the feet of God and waiting the dawn of heaven’s greater day for Israel, his fortunes were closely linked with those of the Kenites. Jethro, his father-in-law, and Hobab, who no doubt in after days served as eyes for the wilderness wanderers, were both Kenites. It would seem that the family of Jethro, at least, went along with the children of Israel all the way until they reached the promised land, where they lived a nomad life, dwelling, so far as such a restless people can be said to dwell anywhere, among the Amalekites.

When and how the Kenites first gained their knowledge of the true Jehovah we may never know; but somewhere and somehow they seem to have accepted him to be their leader and commander. May we not well believe that the wilderness experience, when they were sojourning with Moses and the

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chosen people, served to foster and strengthen the faith which had had its birth in the land of Midian? True it is that all the way through that trying period which came after the tribe had been engrafted into the people of Amalek, Jethro and his immediate household held to the ancient belief of Jehovah, so that when the command came to Saul, "Go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have," the king, remembering the past, with a fine sense of honor, while lying in the valley waiting for a favorable moment in which to attack the doomed people, dispatched a messenger with this word to the Kenites: "Go, depart, get you down from among the Amalekites: lest I destroy you with them; for ye showed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt."

"So"—thus runs the narrative—"the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites." Just where they went, and what was the future history of the people, nobody knows; but we cannot help wondering if they did not take refuge in some part of the land of Judah which was so strong that when that strange prophet, Balaam, the son of Beor, "saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance,

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but having his eyes open," was warranted in saying what he did of the home of the Kenites.

"And he looked on the Kenites, and took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwellingplace, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock."

Safe in the rift of the rock! Storms may howl about thee; war with its devastation may surge on every hand, sweeping the nations out of the way like chaff from the winnowing wheat; God may thresh Amalek with the flail of Israel until its sin is all purged away; but thou, little band, art safe, because thou hast showed kindness to the people of Jehovah in the day of their great trouble!

NESTING OUT OF THE REACH OF EVIL

Life's fairest meadows have their perils. The birds find it so. Yesterday they hung their beauty-woven homes down among the waving grasses. Daisies bent over them tenderly. How sweetly the brook murmured in its wandering seaward! What could there be of danger in a nesting-place like that! It was only last night that the mother bird, when the sunshine was flashing its good-night over the world, peeped in upon her birdlings with happy heart, for all was well.

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But that was last night. This morning the little bird home is a ruin. The threads which fastened it to the bush are broken, broken the white and purple cords with which it was bound. Torn and spoiled are the lining of wool and the silken mattress. While the shadows lay deep over meadow and hill an enemy passed by, and only a wreck is left. Mother bird driven from her home, little ones gone, dreams all shattered—life a mockery!

We have seen it so many a time, friend of my heart! It was but a few days ago that we put the last touches on the house which we hoped would be our dwellingplace as long as we would need one anywhere on this old earth. How long we had been planning for this, our nestingplace! Through many a year we had been working and sacrificing and saving that one day we might move into a home of our own. It would be for the last time until we went out when God would whisper to us, "Come up to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We were so happy when at last we put off the sandals of our pilgrimage and leaned back in our easy chairs to dream, to rest our souls and to love our birdlings.

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The morning light broke, but it burst on a place of desolation. Not our home, surely? Ah, but it is so. Something came through the gloaming and struck the place which was so dear to us. Was it sin? It must have been. Nothing else could ever be so cruel. Gone the hopes of the years, gone the day dreams, gone the little plans that made past days so happy in prospective, gone the visions, the long looking into the rapture that was to be!

Now what? Shall the soul grow bitter and the sunlight of the heart be changed to midnight blackness? Shall we give up the striving, the hoping, the dreaming?

That is not what the bird does. She wings her way to the heights in search of a safer home. She had to be driven from the meadow that she might seek the mountain peak. Patiently she gathers up the fragments of her broken nest, all the shreds of cord, the bits of wool, the very ravelings of cloth, and bears them away from the lowlands, away from the rippling brook. She flits to the cleft in the side of the rock. Here she builds once more, and builds for peace and love and joy.

Shall we not be wise enough to learn from

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this little dweller up yonder the lesson of the life which is hid with God? Because he knows the peril of the valley he invites us to the hiding of the Rock. He whispers to us, if we but lean out our souls to listen: "The clover blossoms are enchanting; I know it; but their beauty does not last. A little while and they will all be cut down and wither as the leaf. The brook sings a sweet song now. Yet a little while and the heat of the day will smite its waters and you will listen for their music in vain. Come up with me! I will hide thee in the cleft of the Rock! I will be to thee everything thou thoughtest to find in the valley meadow! Come, dear heart! Come with me."

And shall we not place our hands in the hands of God and let him lead us whithersoever he will? High up yonder he has riven a place for us all, in the very heart of the Rock which is Christ Jesus. It is always noonday up there. He will slit the leaves for us in many a place. The sunshine will filter in to light up every experience of life—"the Lamb shall be the Light thereof." Here we may build our home, knowing that it will last. Here nothing can ever come to molest us or

THE NEST IN THE SIDE OF THE ROCK

make us afraid—we are safe in the rift of the Rock!

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast,
There by his love o’er-shaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest!
Hark! ’tis the voice of Jesus
Borne in a song to me,
Over the fields of glory,
Over the jasper sea.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe from corroding care,
Safe from the world’s temptations,
Sin cannot harm me there.
Free from the blight of sorrow,
Free from my doubts and fears,
Only a few more trials,
Only a few more tears!

“Jesus, my heart’s dear refuge,
Jesus has died for me;
Firm on the Rock of Ages,
Ever my trust shall be!
Here let me wait with patience,
Wait till the night is o’er;
Wait till I see the morning
Break on the Golden Shore.

“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on his gentle breast,
There by his love o’er-shaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest!”
(Fanny Crosby.)

CHAPTER III

FIRE OUT OF A ROCK

WHEN did the eye of mortal man ever behold a scene like this before or since? A naked rock under a wide-spreading oak; on its top a "kid of the goats," slain and tastefully arranged in a wicker basket; a few cakes of unleavened bread and a measure of flour—all constituting a meat offering unto the Lord; on one side of the stone a man in the humble garb of a tiller of the soil; on the other the angel of the Lord, staff in hand.

A moment they stand there, the man pale with suppressed emotion, looking with eager, questioning gaze into the face of his visitor; the heavenly messenger, searching deep into the soul of the man who stood over against him. Suddenly the hand which holds the staff is stretched out. Its far end touches the flesh of the kid and the unleavened cakes. Up from the rock rises a slender pillar of smoke, out of which soon shoots a flame of fire, licking up the sacrifice and dying only when the last morsel has been consumed. Another moment

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and with wondering eyes the man of the hills sees the mysterious visitant vanish from his sight.

A GREAT CALL TO A GREAT MAN

A great call had come to Gideon. For a moment it must have stunned him when the angel of the Lord appeared to him with the message, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites." What wonder that a simple man of the fields, all unused to the ways of war, should stagger back with the startled cry, "O my Lord, where-with shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least of my father's house." What could it mean that such a summons should come to him?

It was a time of great stress in Judah. As he had done many a time in the past, and as he must often do in the future, Jehovah was writing the story of his people with a pen dipped in blood, the blood of their own veins. Lulled by the prosperity which had come to them, a condition of great wickedness, manifested in idolatry and a gradual slipping away from God, had developed. At last Jehovah was provoked to rise in judgment. And the

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instrument he was using to lash Israel back into the old pathway of peace was the wild tribe of Midian, perhaps in alliance with the fierce Amalekites and other Arab neighbors.

Bound together in a vast federation a hundred and twenty thousand strong, these tribes, a veritable scourge in the hand of Jehovah, poured across the Jordan. Not once only did they come, but over and over again, year after year, carrying away the cattle of the Israelites, robbing them of their grain and trampling under foot all that they did not care to use, until the harassed people fled out of the country from Esdraelon to Gaza, up into the hills and even into the torrent-chiseled rocks—anywhere, so that they might escape the torment inflicted upon them by this pitiless flail of Jehovah.

Hunted thus even to the caves and holes of the earth, Israel longed for deliverance, promising, as so many times before, to return to the true God and never let go his hand again. But where was the man brave enough and stout enough of hand and heart to free them from their oppressors? He must be a man clean without and within, as well as strong of limb; they were sure of that now.

FIRE OUT OF A ROCK

God could not use any but a man of the purest heart. The day was indeed a dark one; and the worst of it was that the people had with their own hands woven the curtain which shut them away from the sunlight of God's presence. And is it not ever so?

"BEFORE THEY CALL I WILL ANSWER"

And God had a man in training, although that man was all unaware of the honor which was so soon to come upon him. God never lacks a man when he needs one. Human eyes, searching ever so closely, may discover no sign of the coming of the deliverer. All unknown, even to the man of God's choosing it may be, the divine passion may be slumbering in his heart, strength may be developing in his arm, love and hope, and faith to move mountains may be springing up within him like flowers from the ashes of a fire-swept forest; and when the clock strikes—God's great clock of destiny—he steps forth to take his place and to do the work God knows he will do.

How carefully has God set down the line of ancestry, as well as the geographical location of the man upon whom he would put his

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finger in this the hour of Israel's extremity! "And there came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertaineth unto Joash, the Abiezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites." Threshing wheat while God seeks thee! Thou blessed of the Lord, how we do envy thee! Busy about thy day's work, pressing from morning until night the duties of thy humble calling, all unaware of the heavenly eyes that are watching thee, and the shining hosts which are keeping their never-ceasing vigil over thee, surely thou art just where we should be! Just there, and never anywhere else, will our sacred mission come to us, if ever it comes at all. How oft do we sit in the shade of the friendly tree, hands folded in our lap, eyes seeking to pierce the distance, peering as far as our dull vision may into the future, in the hope that soon the word may come to us, "Go! I have work for thee to do!" Help us to know that God does not thus choose his workmen. We must unfold our hands, we must up and away to the winepress; we must grip the flail and thresh our bit of wheat with all our might; we must prove our worth on the threshing

FIRE OUT OF A ROCK

floor before God will promote us to service on the field of battle.

Gideon's very name proves that he had always been a man of work. "The tree-feller" his father and mother had named him. His tools were the tools of the man of the field—the ax, the sickle, the plow, the flail. It was his to clear the earth of its brush and rubbish, to cut away the trees, to put in the plow and to make the earth bud, bring forth, blossom and bear fruit. Driven from the old home acre, he had succeeded somehow, in spite of the harassing of the Midianites, in growing a bit of wheat. Snatching the bundles from the furrow, he had borne them away to a sheltered spot, and here he was threshing the grain to keep his dear ones from hunger.

But the tree-feller had not been so busy with his work that he had not thought long and deeply about the sad condition of his people. He knew why it was so. In his soul he had felt the steel of sorrow, sorrow that such trouble should have come upon Israel, and deeper sorrow that it should find its source in sin. That was the bitterest part of it. Sin had worked its inevitable havoc in the public and private life of the people. How

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it humiliated him! How earnestly did he long for some sign of a day when the black shadow would lift and Jehovah smile once more on the land of his choosing!

Many a time, it must be, Gideon had brought his meat-offering to the rock in the shadow of the great oak, in the great hope that Jehovah would catch the sweet-smelling flavor and listen to the cry that a better day might come to Israel; that repentance, sincere, earnest, might bring relief from pain and suffering and national disaster. Never before had there been any sign that God was listening. Always until now the smoke had curled upward to mingle with the clouds of the still sky above; the incense had seemed to bring no divine favor; Gideon went back to his work with a weary heart, and yet with a faith unshaken.

And when at last the hour comes and the leader is to be called to the front, Gideon starts back in amazement that God's choice should fall on him. Can it really be true that he is to be the one by whom the invaders are to be driven out and the new day brought to Israel? See how he puts God to the test. There is something about God's patience with Gideon as he dictates whether the fleece of

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wool on the floor shall be wet or dry, as a proof that Jehovah is not mocking him, that fills the heart with mingled wonder and hope; wonder that the Lord of heaven and earth should be so long suffering with his children, and hope that the same forbearance may be extended to us, his doubting, questioning, almost faithless children. Think of it! How steadily the narrative goes on, just as if it were two men who were arguing with one another, and not a puny thing of the dust leading the Lord God Almighty to accept his plan for showing him what it was his duty to do! Listen!

“And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so; for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water. And Gideon said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with

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the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

At last the token of God as given in the fire flaming to lick up Gideon's sacrifice under the oak at Ophrah is substantiated by the fleece lying on the floor, and the tree-feller lays aside his ax and his threshing tools and takes up the sword in Jehovah's service!

THE CALL OF THE FLAMING ROCK

God loves a modest man. See how he kept watch and ward over Moses, patiently going out with his flocks in the morning, choosing for them the choicest bits of grass, bringing them in at eventide and counting them carefully to see if any are missing. Just when God's hour struck, the bush burst forth into the flame which burned but did not destroy. All through those lonely years at the back side of the desert, Moses had been thinking about God's leading as shown in his own life, and wondering why it was so, perhaps sometimes feeling that a great mistake had been made. Was not his place really out there

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in the glare of the world, doing things that would bring him the glory of men, instead of being buried here with the sheep? Very slowly must Moses have learned patience, for that was not his characteristic in the beginning. Little by little he came to see that it is fatal to try to run ahead of God, and that God knew him better than he knew himself. So true was this that when Moses, at last overwhelmed by a sense of his own unworthiness, shrank from God's call, declaring that he could not do the work to which he had been summoned, Jehovah insisted: "Surely, thou canst. I have read thine heart. I know thee, and I will be with thee."

In a later day God sought the young man Saul. Where was he? Pushing himself ahead somewhere with brazen effrontery as a claimant for the kingdom? Riding post haste over the hills of Judæa, with blatant and wide-mouthed declarations that he was best fitted of all to sit on the throne, and stopping here and there to demonstrate the truth of his assertions by feats of throwing the javelin or other deeds of prowess likely to appeal to the unthinking? If this had been the way Saul pressed his claim for first place in the king-

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dom, God never would have spent a single moment looking for him. No. When God sought Saul for the anointing, he found him down among the wagons—hiding! And why hiding? Ah! God knew Saul's heart, and he lifted him from the furrow to the scepter.

Like that was the calling of Gideon. God knew his heart. He was sure that, in spite of his shrinking from the summons which had so strikingly come to him, when the time came he would stand four-square for God and win battles in his name for the chosen people. And Gideon measured up to God's expectations. If he were told to send home thirty thousand men and go against the enemy with three hundred, he did it. If lamps and pitchers were placed in his hands to fight with, he took them and marched bravely away, sure that he was on the way to victory, for God was with him. God had touched the bare rock and it had flamed heavenward, a symbol of Jehovah's approval in the hour of the people's extremity.

And there is an uplifting hand ever under the arm of the man who trusts not in his own strength but in the God of Gideon and of Moses and of David. Up from the rock will

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flame the fire of conviction. If he asks that the fleece may be dry in the morning, not a drop of dew will moisten the wool at day-break. If he still stands uncertain before his prospective task and pleads that the fleece may lie one night more on the bare threshing floor, so that God may dampen it to show that he really means what he says, water by the bowlful will drip from heaven in the night shadows, upon the wool, while all the earth around is as dry as the drought of summer can make it.

So patient is God with you and me! A thousand times he calls us to go and we do not go. We pretend that we have not heard the summons. We do not want to hear. How can we hear? The clang and the clatter of the world ring so in our ears. We grow to love its sounds, once so distracting to us. What if they do tire us and wear life out? We do not realize it until at last God says, "I must speak to you. I have a right to your life, my child! I cannot let you go this way! It is the way of doubt and of death! I need you. Come from the noise and the clangor. Come from the sheep herding! Come from the threshing floor. Come from the hiding

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among the baggage and give me all that is left of thy life. I will make it so much richer. Thou shalt win victories for me. Hast thou been content too long to lag in the rear, a campfollower in the army of God? I will make thee a winner of souls. Thou hast found thy greatest joy in gathering poppies in the meadow. I will help thee to harvest armfuls of golden grain, until thy store house can no longer hold it. Only come! Give thy life into my keeping. Come! Be a king for me."

And shall we not go?

"God calling yet! Shall I not hear?
Earth's pleasures shall I still hold dear?
Shall life's swift passing years all fly,
And still my soul in slumber lie?

"God calling yet! And shall he knock,
And I my heart the closer lock?
He is waiting to receive;
And shall I dare his spirit grieve?

"God calling yet! And shall I give
No heed, but still in bondage live?
I wait—but he does not forsake;
He calls me still—my heart, awake!

"God calling yet! I cannot stay!
My heart I yield without delay;
Vain world, farewell! From thee I part!
The voice of God has reached my heart."
(Gerhard Terstegen.)

CHAPTER IV

DWELLING ON THE TOP OF THE ROCK

WHEN the light of the soul dies to a dim flicker and faith almost loses its grip, we love to turn to that part of the Book where Paul sets down for us the list of the men of the long ago, who by reason of their hold upon God were able to win mighty victories, the like of which no man of a doubting heart can ever hope to gain. Very majestically the story goes on from Abraham down through the line of the patriarchs. We have some account of the details of the great and grand things they were able to do by means of their trust in Him who is invisible and yet who was very real to them. Then at last, as if tired of mentioning particulars, the sacred writer begins to gather up God's heroes into one splendid cluster, as one might fill his arms with rare flowers from a field through which he is passing never to return. How swiftly the narrative hurries on!

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"Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets."

As Paul runs his finger down the list, how the heart is thrilled! The pulses which a moment ago ran so weak and cold now bound and turn into a fiery stream in one's veins! What a story! How true it is that faith does really win the victory! We are ready to rise up again and go forth with renewed zeal to wage life's battles. Surely, we shall win; we must win with Jesus Christ to be our Leader and our Guide.

Then suddenly one name rises in tremendous prominence before us. For a moment that name overshadows all the rest. It is the name of Samson. Samson among the heroes? Paul, have you not made a mistake about this? How does it happen that the name of this man should ever claim such preeminence as you have given him? Samson—what memories that name brings up! Memories of a life of mingled contrasts such as might well stagger one did he not remember that every life is just so full of lights and shades; memories of fields of corn set on fire by flam-

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ing torches fastened to the tails of foxes, the grim plotting of a man, who, judged by that act, might seem scarcely capable of doing anything really great or true or manly; memories of mighty victories won in the Spirit of the Lord, with the strangest weapon of man's devising, marking Samson as a man of superior strength and entitling him to admiration, if not respect; and still more bitter memories, pierced through and through by the pitiful cry of a blind giant, bowing himself against the door posts of a doomed house. O the pathos of that last call to heaven!

"O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God."

And God did hear the cry of this man of the childlike heart, so that it is written of him that he gained a greater conquest in death than ever he did in his life.

Sometimes we laugh as we think of Samson and his history, and sometimes we cry. Now he seems to us little more than a jester, as he carries away the gates of Gaza on his back; now he is the invincible conqueror, driving Philistia to the wall and redeeming his people. Surely, we must always look upon him as

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avored of God and worthy to be set down with the rest "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." All so brave, so true and so full of faith that the world is not worthy to be reckoned up against them. On the high tide of faith, Samson at last is swept with all this goodly company safe into the Kingdom.

"THE SUNNY-FACED" AND THE SUNNY-HEARTED

We love to think of the coming of the "sunny-faced" boy Samson to that father and mother up among the cliffs of Zorah. Never before had this home known the prattle of a child voice; but soon God would have need of a man, so the "sunny-faced" boy was sent to bless them, and in due season to redeem Israel. Strange that it should have been to this humble man of the tribe of Dan and to a wife whose very name has been kept a secret with God—that it should have been to these two that so divine a favor was granted. So

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we might say, were it not that Manoaah was one of the few who still kept the faith in the midst of that ungodly generation. God never makes a mistake. He not only picks out his men but he chooses the homes in which they shall live; and in the case of Samson he did more than that. He sent his messenger with minute directions as to the bringing up of the child that was to be. The times were peculiar; a man of peculiar ability would be needed to pave the way out of the wild and stormy period that had come upon the Israelites to the stronger form of government ushered in in the time of Saul.

Weakened by sin, tormented by foes on every hand, the state of affairs in Israel was indeed pitiable. Was the handful of corn on the top of the mountain to be wasted, the last kernel of seed to be lost? What wonder if even the heart of the truest Israelite grew faint as he asked that question? Well was it that all this was in God's safe-keeping. He would not let the germ of the nation's life be lost. Out of the dry, dead root of the man of Zorah He would bring forth the sprout which should one day scourge Philistia into subjection. So the "sunny" boy came. Prom-

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ised of God, born to the vows of the Nazirite, blessed of Jehovah, moved at times by the Spirit of the Lord, mighty from his youth up in all deeds of prowess, Samson springs to the stage just when God would have him come to the leadership.

And a fiery leader Samson proved to be too, so meteoric in action and so incomprehensible in his planning that even his friends followed him with surprised fidelity, while his enemies had no possible means of safeguarding themselves against him. He was ever a thorn in the side of Philistia and they were at their wits' end to know how to cope with him. Could he by any means be brought low? Was not the Spirit of the Lord with him? How powerless must be the best efforts of the men of Philistia when compared with the shrewd native wit, the superhuman strength of one like Samson, when backed up by the Lord of heaven and earth! And yet—!

With a sure confidence that one thus endowed must win, that he never can fail, no matter what may be the machinations of men or demons, we turn on through the pages of the divine record. Soon our hearts stand still

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as we come to the story of the awful wreck and failure. When God writes the history of your life and mine, he leaves nothing out. Sometimes we wish he might pass over some things. After some terrible lapse in conduct, when the lights have burned low along the shore and my life-bark has drifted into the thick shadows of sin; when I have well-nigh forgotten God; when faith seems clean gone; when I have stained my soul crimson in the pool of evil, and then have been found of God, who has ever remembered me in mercy, and I have been brought back to my better self, sore of heart, ashamed of my awful degradation, then with what agony do I cry to him out of the night watches and on until the day comes to its brightest: "O, my Father, write not this story of my sin against me in the book of thy remembrance! Have I not suffered for my wickedness? Thou knowest how deep is my sorrow! I believe thou hast spoken forgiveness to my soul! Then surely I may be spared the humiliation of knowing that this black spot in my life has been set down against me in the book of life! Let only the good I have done be written down! Surely, there have been a few such things. Give them a place

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in thy great scroll, but spare me, I do pray thee, all the rest, for thou seest my grief and my penitence."

And I am sure it would be so were that best. But I know that while I lie with my face in the dust I shall hear God saying unto me: "My child, I know it all. I do pity thee, for I know thou art indeed sincere in thy sorrow. It shall be as it was between me and thee. The sin and the shame shall all be wiped away out of thy soul. More than that may not be. God is Truth, as well as Mercy and Justice. What is written, is written, and it must stand."

So I know that on the pages kept in heaven, every sin of my soul stands, and must stand. It has been so from the foundation of the world; it must be so to the end. The bad and the good, the foul and the fair, the failure and the winning, the doubting and the hoping—so the record must be made up, not that you and I may be thereby humiliated and broken down in spirit, but so that humanity may be helped and warned and kept from falling too.

And I believe also that some day, when He comes for me, and the Lamb's book of life is

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opened, I shall find that all the weakness and the base and the sin-blackened things of my earth-life have been covered by the blood! I shall lean over the shoulder of my Saviour and hear him say, "Thy sins which have been many are all forgiven thee." Not a trace of them to be seen on that fair page! So great is his mercy toward them that love him and fear him.

Here, then, in the Book is told for your instruction in righteousness and mine, the story of a prisoner, it may be of priestly blood, with eyes gouged out by pitiless enemies, staggering blindly and holding hard to the arm of his guide until he comes to the posts of the house. What is this? One more effort on the part of a sin-defeated man to prove his strength? A last final attempt to startle or amuse those pressing about him? If we think that, we greatly misjudge this hero of the faith! This is Samson's supreme effort in behalf of the people he loves and for whom he has given the best there was in him. Swiftly, almost heartlessly so, the sacred narrative runs on: "And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were there-

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in. . . . Then his brethren and all the house of his father came down and took him, and buried him between Zorah and Eshta-ol in the burying-place of Manoah his father. And he judged Israel twenty years."

YIELDING TO HIS DEATH

Samson had known the joy of victory. The conquering spirit from Jehovah had surged through his veins. Even in the hour of his final defeat, when the red-hot passion of his heart dragged him down to the very dust, Samson had something of the hero in him.

At the very high tide of success Samson grew tired. He was tired of his conquests and tired of his defeats. He longed for some retreat where he could go and be still with God. How the world does wear the very soul into shreds! And Samson chose a goodly place. He knew where he might be near to God.

"And he went down and dwelt in the top of the rock Etam."

On the top of the rock Etam—safe with God! If Samson only might have stayed in that sheltering presence, or if he might have carried that presence with him everywhere,

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how it would have changed the whole course of his after career!

“THEY BOUND HIM!”

On the Rock of God we have taken our refuge. We have had the battle of our lives. In the early gloaming of the morning we girded ourselves for the fray. We unsheathed our blade with a right good will and threw away the scabbard. We fought the good fight of faith. Before the shout of victory went up we were flailed and wounded from head to foot. Sin did its worst. We carried away many a sore; and yet it seemed to us a victory. A victory, although our souls were stained with the crimson shame long before night let down its curtain. Not always had we been responsive to the bugle call of the Great Commander. Sometimes we had let the banner of the cross trail in the dust in our very presence. As we looked back over the day we had to confess that it had been one of mingled gain and loss. Not yet were we safe. Even through the on-creeping mists of the evening we could hear the rallying cry of the enemies of our souls—the enemies we thought we had beaten back forever. It startled us. Not yet

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through to victory! Not yet have we attained! How blessed then to hear God calling us up to him!

“Come with me, my child. Thou needest the comfort and the quiet of the Rock. Give me thine hand and I will lead thee. The way is narrow and stony; but there is peace at the top. Come up to the rock Etam.”

Once I visited a great factory. As I passed with my guide from room to room I became conscious that it was more and more difficult for me to understand what he was saying to me. I drew up more closely, but a strange, distracting noise even then swallowed up his voice. My own words sounded weak and far away. With some difficulty the guide made me understand that the sound came from a great square box over in one corner of the building. The nearer we came to it the more its thunder shut out every other sound. Then the guide touched a little lever, and the din came to an end. Opening a small door in the side of the box, which had been slowly revolving before we came, the guide showed me that it was partly filled with bolts in the making. As the box moved round and round, the bolts tumbled from side to side, striking one upon

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another, making the confusion which had so deafened me; but that motion was grinding off the sharp corners of the bolt heads and polishing the entire piece of metal until it was as smooth as glass. Just now tumult, distraction; now silence and rest. One turn of the hand brought it all about.

How good it seems to creep away and be alone with God. I am so tired of the worry and the noise and the fret of life. Now the hand of God is laid upon the jangling machinery, and all is still. The gate has been shut between me and the world. I am on the heaven-side of the door.

At eventide in my boyhood days mother used to sit in the gathering shadows with her work on her lap. There were six of the little ones, and the hours had been filled with care. There had been clothes to make, food to prepare, and many a hurt to kiss away from the tear-stained cheeks of brothers and sisters. Now the little ones, the nestlings of the home, crept up to mother's side for the good-night kiss. The last worn stocking lay there neatly mended. With folded hands she was looking away toward the sky, still touched with the sunset. With a hush on our souls we listened

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while she sang, in a voice just as sweet as that she knows on the other side, I am sure, this eventide song:

"Thus far the Lord hath led me on,
Thus far his power prolongs my days;
And every evening shall make known
Some fresh memorial of his grace.

"Much of my time has run to waste,
And I perhaps am near my home;
But he forgives my follies past
And gives me strength for days to come.

"I lay my body down to sleep;
Peace is the pillow for my head,
While well-appointed angels keep
Their watchful stations round my bed.

"Faith in his name forbids my fear;
O may thy presence ne'er depart:
And in the morning make me hear
The love and kindness of thy heart!"
(Watts.)

We could not know the tug at the heart of our mother as she thought of the one she had loved and lost for a little while; but there was something in the look of her dear face that hushed our voices and helped us to know that her soul was away in the very Holy of holies where God is. She was on the Rock of Etam, and it was precious to her.

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NO SOUND OF BELLS

Up here not even the sound of the bells of yonder town, gurgling through the twilight, has aught to disturb us. Are we not nearer to God than those who gather in the valley to call upon his name? So we fancy. Why should we go down from our comfortable eyrie? Let us lean back our souls and rest.

“One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.”

So might Samson have sung up there in the rock Etam. It must have been a blessed experience to him, away from the noise and the tumult on the plain. But it came to an end. Listen!

“Then three thousand men of Judah went

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to the top of the rock Etam. And they said unto him, We are come down to bind thee, that we may deliver thee into the hands of the Philistines. . . . And they bound him with two new cords, and brought him from the rock."

Strange ending of what had been such a joyous resting time! Scarcely can we understand it. Did those men of Judah realize that in their extremity Samson would be worth a thousand men to them when they came into close grips with the Philistines? But did they distrust him after all, so that they were afraid to leave him to go down with them unbound and of his own accord, hoping that if they could but get him face to face with the foe, the old-time fire would break out in his heart and win for them the victory?

And did Samson plead that his peace up there on the top of the rock should not be broken? Did he say, "You do not know what you ask. I have been very happy in my rock hiding place. Why should I put out my hands to be bound, so that I may be delivered, as you plainly tell me, into the hands of the Philistines? Go back and fight your own battles. Leave me to my tryst with Jehovah"?

It would be like you and me to say that.

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Did not the three who were granted the privilege of going with the Master up into the mount of transfiguration have some such feelings? It was so calm up there! All the world was in a hush! No distracting sounds, no distressing appeals for help. Only heaven's stillness, with angel visitants to make the place more sacred! "It is so like heaven here! Let us make tents and stay as long as we will." Ah, Peter, that would not be well for thee nor for the poor, tired, sick and sin-tossed men down yonder. Very gently Jesus must have said it to Peter, leading the way back to the valley with its hard duties.

So it is with us all. Just when heaven seems nearest and Christ dearest, outside the door of the soul clamant sounds arise. A thousand things leap up at the window to urge us to stay. A sunburst of alluring lights dazzles us. Myriads of voices—ah, how these voices of the flesh do tempt us to linger in the lap of sin! "Stay," they whisper. "We will make you happier than you ever have been before. You do not forget how blissful have been your experiences in the past, up here, so close to God. Why put out your hands to be fettered? Be forever free. Do

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not go back to the hard round of petty cares and trials."

Does it not seem clear that the man of the sunny face recognized the call of God when it came to him? Let us go on with the story and see what came to him when he turned his back on Etam with its peace, its ease, and its release from service.

"And when he came unto Lehi, the Philistines shouted against him: and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands. And he found a new jaw-bone of an ass, and put forth his hand and took it, and slew a thousand men therewith."

Well done, Samson! Thou hast seen what far too many of a later day have failed to understand: that there is no failure like the defeat of standing still when God's call is to service. Hadst thou sent the messengers from thy people back and remained up there in thine eyrie, it may be thy name would have been missing from the roll of heroes. May we all learn the lesson of responding, "Here am I!" when the summons to duty comes. It may be in the night shadows, as it was to

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Samuel of old, or it may be when the glare
of noonday lies over all and we would like
to stay under the friendly shelter of some tree
of ease. Let not Etam keep its grip upon
us. May we go down to conquest in the name
of the Lord God of hosts!

"It may not be on the mountain height
Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me;
But if by a still, small voice he calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, 'Dear Lord, with my hand in thine,
I'll go where you want me to go!'

"Perhaps to-day there are loving words
Which Jesus would have me speak—
There may be now in the paths of sin
Some wand'rer whom I should seek—
O Saviour, if thou wilt be my guide,
Though dark and rugged the way,
My voice shall echo the message sweet;
I'll say what you want me to say!

"There's surely somewhere a lowly place,
In earth's harvest field so wide,
Where I may labor through life's short day
For Jesus, the crucified.
So trusting my all to thy tender care,
And knowing thou lovest me,
I'll do thy will with a heart sincere,
I'll be what you want me to be!"

(Mary Brown.)

CHAPTER V

THE PATHWAY BETWEEN THE ROCKS

DIAMOND SHOALS, ten miles off Cape Hatteras, are the dread of all seafaring men. Here, pounding on the rocks, many a good ship has gone to pieces. In a storm which was lashing the sea into a foam of fury and threatening destruction to every craft that ventured out into it, a vessel was beating itself to death, like a bird striking its wings desperately against a wall of stone. Watching through the night from their station on the Cape, the life-saving crew caught the flash of the danger signals sent up by the men of the wrecked traveler of the sea.

In spite of the fact that the tempest was gaining in severity moment by moment, Captain Etheridge gave orders to get out the life boat. For a moment the men looked at the breakers beating themselves into a suds, then turned their backs to the pitiless wind driving like a hurricane.

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"We cannot do it, Captain. It is madness to think of it!"

So some one said. Another pleaded:

"Captain, think what you are doing. Even if we could get the boat out and reach the ship, we never could get back!"

The men knew by the sound of the Captain's voice that his mind was made up and there was no changing it.

"Boys, we don't have to come back."

That was enough. The boat was launched. It reached the wreck. Every soul was saved. The life boat came back; and the world will never forget the words of Captain Etheridge—"Boys, we don't have to come back."

NO COMING BACK

In a narrow defile over against which stood Michmash and Gibeah, Jonathan, the son of Saul, had taken his station. Grim and forbidding on one side towered the cliffs of Sineh, while on the other hand loomed the peaks of the rock Bozez. To a man less intrepid than Jonathan those crags might have seemed insurmountable. Who could scale the heights of Sineh, "the acacia"? Would it be possible for the surest-footed climber in all Israel ever

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to mount to the summit of Bozez, "the shining"?

If any such misgiving existed in the heart of the young prince, not a word of it escapes his lips. We may almost hear him say, "It can be done, and I will do it."

When did Jonathan conceive the idea of scaling those rocks? Had he slipped out of his father's camp some night and by the shimmering moonlight watched the enemies of his people as they clambered in single file by some tangled path up the side of Bozez or the thorn-guarded steeps of Sineh? Had some trusty servitor brought him news that the Philistines had intrenched themselves on that apparently inaccessible height? We cannot tell. But we do know that Jonathan must have realized the danger which might await the army of his father were not the enemy dislodged from that well-nigh impregnable position. Somehow it must be done, and he determined that he would do it.

But where was the king of Israel, that he should not be the one to undertake this bold adventure?

The sacred narrative tells us this: "In the uttermost part of Gibeah," under a pome-

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granate tree, Saul was crouching with his little band of six hundred. This was all that was left of the three thousand with which the king set out. Picked men they all had been; but things had gone badly with Saul. Philistia's "thirty thousand chariots, six hundred horsemen and people as the sand of the seashore" had been too much for him. His defeat in battle had not been the worst thing to befall the first king of Israel. Thus early in his career, the leader so eagerly sought by all the people who expected so much of him—thus early had he been discredited by Jehovah. Crowned by the saintly Samuel himself, chosen under the direction of God, with so much of opportunity before him and the hopes of a nation back of him, he was even now smarting from the sting of a rebuke such as no man less sensitive than Saul could ever fully appreciate. How awful must have seemed the words of the good old prophet, wrung from pale and quivering lips!

"Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But now"—O the pity of those

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words!—"now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

How like the knell of the death of hope that must have sounded to Saul! And here he was, under the pomegranate tree with his six hundred—so few, and yet what might not the king have done with that handful of men? Had not Gideon won great victories with half as many? All that was lacking was an obedient spirit. What if the only swords in all Israel were those under the hands of Saul and his son Jonathan? What if every other soldier in the army must fight with clubs and ox-goads brought from the fields when the king sent his call for men ringing over the hills and valleys of the land? If the heart be right, lamps and pitchers become as the sword of the Lord. Ox-goads and sticks cut from the slenderest sapling are changed into flails with which to thresh the foe as the man of the field beats the wheat from the straw at harvest time.

On his face, turned into a coward by his

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sorrow, it must be that the king did not know when his son crept out of the camp, accompanied by his armor-bearer, taking his way straight back to the rocks of Bozez and Sineh, a mighty purpose stirring his heart to its very depths.

When was it that the sublime consciousness came to this lion-hearted young man that if his people were true, the Lord God would battle for those he loved? How did he come to have the assurance that fidelity on the part of Israel was all that would be necessary to bring victory? What led him to think that he himself had been called of Jehovah for this desperate venture? Was it somewhere out in the darkness when he had bowed low before God in prayer, his face wet with the night dews, not more surely than by the tears he shed? Calling mightily that Jehovah might not utterly forsake his own, did the conviction come over him that he was to be the instrument through which success was to be achieved? We may not know, but sure it is that many a Jacob has won on his knees victory for himself and for his people.

It would seem that he was for a time not quite sure where the glimmerings of his faith

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would lead him. With something of modest hesitation we hear him saying to his attendant: "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few." And Jonathan's armor-bearer, whatever may have been the misgiving of his own mind, stoutly expresses his confidence in the ability of the young leader: "Do all that is in thine heart. . . . behold, I am with thee, according to thy heart."

True-hearted friend of the unknown name! What could not every Jonathan do with such a man at his side!

BOZEZ AND SINEH

Over there towered Bozez and Sineh. Looking up the steep slopes of those apparently inaccessible rocks, the one fronting the other, what else did Jonathan see? The red-handed men of Philistia? Bare and slippery cliffs? Only the difficulties which lay in the way? Yes, but more he saw. Not one of these things rose inch-high with this man of the trusting heart. He saw God. More and more sure became the faith of Jonathan as he fought his

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way up the circuitous pathway. Hear him now, as at last he pulls himself up on his hands and knees, his loyal companion pressing tight upon his heels: "Come up after me; for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel." Again we catch the spirit of brave Captain Etheridge looking into the eye of the storm that awful night off Cape Hatteras: "Boys, we don't have to come back."

And up there on the top of the rock, where there was scarcely room for two score men to get a foothold, Jonathan and his armor-bearer fought out the battle which sent a "great trembling" through the ranks of the Philistines and scattered them in dismay to the four winds of the heavens. Like snow on a hot summer's day the multitude melted before the onslaught of their God-girded opponents. "So the Lord saved Israel that day."

UPON HANDS AND KNEES

Life is wonderfully sweet to-day. We are so happy. We are winning our way to honor. Friends love us. Fortune pours its treasures lavishly into our lap. Our pathway lies through flower-bedecked meadows. Still waters lave the shores of our souls. It seems to us we

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can feel the touch of the Shepherd's hand on ours. A bountiful table is spread for us. The house of the Lord is our dwelling place. Are we not blessed of God? Yesterday was not less full of joy than is to-day. Surely, the morrow will be just as much so! Let the heart break forth into song!

"My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth."

Still in higher strain lift the heart's song of rejoicing:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though wars should arise against me, in this will I be confident."

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But, hark! there is a knock at the door of the heart, and a messenger—God's messenger—who has come on the wings of the wind, stands at the threshold with a cry on his eager lips: "The outposts have been taken! Make haste! Thy soul is in danger!" It is easy now to smile at the fear which has overtaken conscience, God's beloved evangel. "Be not affrighted, O Conscience, thou art deceived. O friend of the battling soul, there is no danger here! See how the world smiles upon me! Be still, sleep on, let me go on in my dreaming!"

And the faithful monitor shrinks back into the shadows, stabbed by the hand of the one it tries to shield. The sin-deceived heart—your heart and mine—turns back to its revelry, until at last evil crouches at the very doorsill. We are hemmed in and lost. Now we know that Belshazzar's feast has been going on in the temple of our lives: with impious hands we have brought the sacred vessels from the house of God and turned them to the basest of uses. The Philistines have come into possession of the inmost citadel of our souls! Gone the flower-spangled fields in which we used to stray! For us the peaceful

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valley has been changed into a cañon so deep and so dark that we can no longer see the face of the Good Shepherd! What now is left us? What save the bitter cry of King David:

“Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord, and of them that speak evil against my soul. But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name’s sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness. I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads. Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy. That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, Lord, hast done it.”

Surely, this is Bozez and Sineh, and the enemies of our souls are in possession of the heights. Which way now, O my soul? Shall it be the far border, the pomegranate tree and shame? Shall I let my soul be eaten out with remorse “O’er sins indulged while conscience slept”? Or shall I strike out in the strength

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of my Lord upon the thorn-tangled path that leads to the summit? There shall I not fight the battle of my life, until I have defeated and driven away forever all the dark and pitiless foes which have so long beset me—pride, and selfishness, and passion, and wickedness of every name and nature? Shall mine be the story of a sin-conquered Saul or of a true-hearted Jonathan, battling on with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of righteousness, sure that Jesus Christ is my great Armor-Bearer and that he will not let me fail of victory?

Let me now remember that it was on his hands and knees that the son of the king made his way upward through the thorns and the briers. So would I too begin my great quest upward toward my victory and thee! Bring me, O my Saviour, down very low before thee, that some day I may share in thine exaltation! On my very face let me get back the faith sin has blighted, the hope lost through hours of bitterest weeping, the courage slain by days and nights of yielding to shameful pleasures!

Then once more, strong in the strength of God, let me fight on, so that ere the night falls and the bugle call comes to blow out the lights

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for the night, I may be able to say, "So the Lord saved Israel that day." Thus may I strike my harp to David's nobler strain:

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. . . . For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."

CHAPTER VI

GRAVEN IN THE ROCK FOREVER

"Is there anything I can do for you, my boy?"

It is the captain. He is standing at the side of a wounded soldier. His hand is on the forehead of the stricken man, and he knows not more surely by the damp on the pale brow than by the shadow settling over the face that it will soon be too late for the one who has given the best and all there is in him for his country to leave any message for the loved ones at home.

"Yes, captain." The face lights up and the eyes come open a little way. "I'm so glad you asked me. I would like to send one more little word home. You wouldn't want to write it for me, would you? I wrote to my mother just as long as I could, and I know she will miss my letters."

"Sure, old fellow! I'll do it for you. Tell me just what you would like me to say to her."

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The eyes close once more. Memory is slipping back through the years. The captain's eyes cannot see it, but he knows that a vision of home is filling the room. Out from the soldier's heart now comes the message—the last word of a dying boy to his mother.

"Tell her I never have been sorry she taught me to say, 'Now I lay me down to sleep.' It has been in my heart all these years. Tell her I thank her for it. Now that I'm lying down to sleep, I know He will keep my soul."

The pen wrote on, setting down the words the mother-love had been all these years writing in the soul of the martyred soldier.

Writing! Writing! Writing! Man is born with an instinct to write, to set down his thoughts so that they may be seen and read by those who come after him.

Deep in the earth above buried cities the spade of the explorer finds proof of this longing on the part of us all to leave some lasting record of what has been said and thought and done. And it sometimes seems as if the deeper men dig, the more numerous are the tracings of the pen wielded by the dwellers upon earth in the long ago. In caves and high on rocky cliffs; on the dust-covered rocks of age-old

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cities of Egypt; on the cylinders and vases and stone slabs of Babylon, Assyria, and Persia; on the ruined temples of South America and Mexico, and in the depths of the mysterious heaps of earth lifted up by the mound builders of our own country, we find expressions of the same yearning to put in permanent form for future generations the thoughts which have stirred the souls of those who wrote. We all think and hope and dream and are not satisfied unless we can pass on to those who will be here when we are gone the story of our thoughts and our hopes and our dreams.

How varied are the themes of those who wrote in the long ago! Now it is some scrap of personal attainment; now the story of the achievements of some king or nation; now the record of the laws of some people or of the conquest of some soldier. Again the tale is of God's dealings with men; and it is all according to the experience of those who wrote for posterity.

Writing! Writing! Writing! Writing with pen or with hammer and chisel of steel, with many instruments on many kinds of material; on rock, on wood, on papyrus, on cylinders of

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clay, on tablet and beautiful pottery and on homely fragments of iron or copper or bronze—in all ways and in every way man has evinced his desire, yes, his determination not to be forgotten.

But it was not of law or history or philosophy that the man of Uz longed to write. Listen to him as he lifts himself out of the dust and ashes of his life-sorrow: "Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!"

What was it Job so passionately longed to say to the ages to come? Was it the story of his own life? He had done many things well worthy of passing on to future generations. His whole life had been one of great achievements.

"His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east."

Many sons and daughters had been given to him. He had been honored by his fellow

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men. He had the testimony of God himself that he was "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." Best of all, in spite of the downward tug of prosperity, in the face of the fact that Satan himself had tried to move Job to set his face against Jehovah, still God says, "he holdeth fast his integrity."

So that it might appear that the highest aspiration of Job would be, now that it seemed as if time for him had come to an end, to leave in some permanent form the story of his personal accomplishments. Would not the world in days to come be helped and stirred to greater activity by reading such a record? If it had been you or I who had been voicing our last message, we probably would have said: "Write it down with a pen of iron on the face of the rock that I made my way up out of poverty to wealth. Say that I was in the beginning the humblest of all men, but I rose from the ranks; I sat at the gates of the city; I was honored; young men did me reverence and old men rose and stood up in my presence. I was a father to the poor. I was eyes to the blind and feet was I to the lame. God hath truly blessed me. 'His candle shined

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upon my head, and by his light I walked through the darkness.'” Ah, that was a life story of which any of us might well be proud! Men of far more meager attainments have chiseled the record of their work in rock and on steel. But it was not of any of these things that Job was now thinking. Away from all the petty things of earth were his thoughts sweeping. What were earthly fame and honor when compared with the glorious hope which gripped his mind, the magnificent swing of the faith which bore him Godward in this moment of transcendent interest? This is what the man of Uz would have set down so that it would never fade out of the memory of men: *“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”*

Glorious certainty—grand beyond all power of description! Sure revelation of God! Blessed the man who can look beyond all the little worries and frets of this earthly life and even in an hour like this, when the body is racked with pain and suffering so that they

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seem to be doing their very worst, and find comfort in a truth that takes hold upon eternity itself.

It was that this great central truth of all religious faith might be graven on the rocks that Job longed with all his heart. And God has given his yearnings more sure record than could possibly be chiseled with pen of iron on tablet of stone. Some day the breath of time will blow across the rocks and they will crumble into ashes. The day will come when every tablet of bronze, pure though it may be, will melt and go back to its first state. The finger of God will touch papyrus and cylinder and tablet of granite and they will be gone. But the word of God is sure; and in his heart of hearts man will cling to this revelation of the resurrection.

And, after all, it is the heart which most firmly grips the truths of God. Did not the children of Israel know this? Jehovah himself had whispered it to them while yet they were sojourners in the wilderness. They were, indeed, to carve his laws on wood and stone and brass; but more than that: "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine

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eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates.”

And knowing that one day the frontlets might be stripped away, worn to threads by time, that the posts of the doors must some time fall into dust and the gates yield to the destroying hand of the ages, he urged—nay, he commanded—the fathers to write his mandates where they would endure when all else fell into decay: “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”

Well to cut them deep in wood and rock and diamond; but no pen of finest gold can write them so deeply that they will endure till the morn of God’s coming. Write it on the heart and it will outlast time and even eternity itself.

“I know that my redeemer liveth! I shall see God.”

CHAPTER VII

THE EAGLE'S ABIDING PLACE

IT had been years since the old eagle had tried to lift a wing. Taken captive while fighting hard to defend its nest away in the heights of the mountain, it had been brought down to a quiet country home and chained so that it could only move about in a narrow circle.

All its wants had been supplied. The young people had been good and kind to it, and the eagle seemed to have lost through the years of its confinement most of its old wild nature. It appeared to be content to walk about in its narrow circle, and at last it lost much of the stateliness which had once marked its demeanor. Even the fire in its eye grew dim. It seemed no longer to dream of the sky and its far-off eyrie among the cliffs. For a long time it had not been seen to flutter its wings as if for a flight heavenward. Those who cared for it thought it must have really for-

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gotten its old home. Somehow this thought made them glad, for it had been heartbreaking in the past to watch the bird as it chafed in its prison.

A change came into the life of the man who had so long kept the old eagle a captive. He was soon to go away across the country to a new home. He wondered what he had better do with his old friend of the mountain height. Would any one else care for the bird as he had done? It did not seem wise to try to take the eagle with him so far. He might not outlive such a change. So it was deemed best to set the bird at liberty. On the day chosen for this the keeper asked some of the neighbors to come and watch with him the actions of the long-imprisoned king of the sky. Then he unfastened the chain which had so long been fastened to the eagle's leg. For a moment the great bird kept its place, unconscious of the freedom which had come to it. With its head still deep sunken in the feathers of its neck, it hovered there with half-shut eyes, as if dreaming of something very pleasant.

The keeper touched the eagle with his hand gently and tried to urge it to move beyond

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the well-worn limit of its chain. Thus inspired, the bird slowly stepped out a little way, but when it came to the border of its old circle it stopped, as if it still felt the tugging of the chain on its ankle. Once the steel fetters had worn its limb sore; now the hurt was deeper—the spirit of the monarch of the heavens had been wounded. It could not but feel the pull of the little chain upon its limbs. Round and round the hard-beaten circle it went, just as it had done for many a year. A sense of pity came over those who stood watching the bird in its seeming impotence. Was it indeed too helpless to fly? Had it really lost its love of the far-away mountain peaks? Had captivity paralyzed its limbs and robbed it of its power to accept freedom, as well as its love of the old nesting place?

Suddenly the bird shook out its long unused wings, first one and then the other, stretching them far out. A new light came into the eye which a moment ago was so dull! Up toward the blue it turned its gaze, as if searching for something long lost. Crouching low to the earth for a moment, the bird lifted itself for flight. But captivity had done its work: the muscles were all weak and sore

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from disuse. The eagle sank back; still, the fire did not go from its eyes. Again and again it summoned every power for the journey skyward. Each time there seemed to be more of strength. Higher and higher became the flight. Then with a glad cry the bird mounted and soared away—up, up, up, lost at last beyond the reach of human sight!

POWER LOST

“Only an eagle!” do we say? And yet, how like to your life and mine! There are times when we rejoice to think that we are living far up the heights, out of the reach of danger. What can harm us here? Like the eagle, we fancy we have made our nest under the shadow of the Almighty!

Listen to God as he pictures to his servant Job the instinct of this bird of the sunshine to wing her way just as far heavenward as she can, and there make her home: “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.” From this lofty eyrie “her eyes behold afar off.” From higher flight to still loftier soaring we too scale the peaks of

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this earthly life until we seem to have reached the very summit of heavenly experience. There we settle down to make our abiding place. Surely, here we are safe. What can disturb us now? Our eyes behold afar off. We grow proud. All the world is under our feet. Up here is God—God and we.

Then something comes to awaken us from our dreaming. Just now it seemed to us that we were living so close to God that nothing could ever come between us and him. Our dreams were being worked out into realities, like tapestries under the skilled hand of the weaver. When hope's song had reached its very highest note, when honor and love and all earthly blessings seemed to be fairly tumbling out of our over-filled arms, all at once, as if one had hurled a jagged rock against the strings of a beautiful harp, our visions became blurred, our peace was riven asunder, our aspirations hurled down and crushed. What has done it?

Was it God who tore the nest to pieces and slipped the fetters about our wrists? God who flung us into this crucible? God who struck the cords of our lute? No, it cannot be so. God stands in heaven's doorway, point-

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ing out to us the evil thing hovering so near to our home. Did we but turn our ears that way, we might hear his voice wooing us to "Return unto me, O ye people." But we will not, so the nest is stripped from its pretty nook on the side of the rock.

O how the poppies do charm us, so that we do not see the richer, fairer blossoms which grow along life's pathway! What is this lure of sin, that it should blind our eyes to the danger lurking a few steps ahead and lead us to forget heaven itself?

God hurting us? Why, God puts his hand out to shield us from the blows he knows are coming. He would stay us if he could! Sometimes there is pain in the touch of his hand stretched across our way, but he doth not willingly afflict! Not because he would cause us to suffer does he let the shadow fall, but because he cannot say we shall not do the thing we would. We plunge headlong into evil; then, looking around for the cause of our pain, we see God and charge him with having brought the suffering which has stricken us down; and all the while he is there only to help and to cheer and to save if we will but let him do it.

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Close by our side he walks when the clouds of trouble, lifted up out of the ocean by the heat of our own passion and heavy with storm, hang dark over our souls. He may not keep the tears back—tears are sometimes good for the soul—but he does put out his hand to wipe our sorrow away. Dewdrops fall on the cheek of the lily; God lends warmth to the sunshine and the mist is kissed away. Our eyes are dim with tears of penitence; God touches them with his finger of love and they disappear. Our feet are set hard toward the red road to death; God lets the thorns prick us till the blood runs, and when we stop and look and listen, he heals the wound and makes the narrow way thrice happier than we found the broad highway of sin to be.

And so it is that evil comes into the nest of the mountain height. No more for us the dazzling peaks of heavenly happiness; never again the calm resting among the sunlit summits of the Rock. In a moment the nest is broken up and we are hurled back to earth. Here we are, chained down to tread the little circle drawn for us by the fetters of sin, never again to rise above the dust and the grime. Here we grovel, our wings soiled and weak-

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ened for the skyward flight and becoming more so day by day. So tired of it all, so sick of sin, so cheated, so crippled, so helpless—and all because we did not abide, aye, abide under the shadow of the Almighty!

UP TOWARD THE BLUE AGAIN

But must we always stay with our feet fast in the mire? Must we trail our wings, which might be bathing in the sunlight of God always, in the filth of this world?

“I am going to meet a little company of young girls now, Nancy. I would like to take them some word from you. What shall it be?”

Nancy's head droops. Standing there on the other side of the bars of her prison cell, a tear finds its way down her cheek. When she lifts her face to look into the kindly eyes of the visitor she says: “Tell them that the wages of sin is death. One can never escape the penalty of wrongdoing, even a very little wrong. Some day that sin will surely find us out.”

May we not weave about Nancy Wellesley this story—a story as old as sin is old?

Never had a girl a better home than she. Up among the pine trees of a State among the

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lakes, her father had made his home when his daughter was a wee lassie. It was a sunny home. Nancy lacked for no good thing. All that her father and mother believed to be for her best interest she received from their indulgent hands. Under the whispering trees she could lie on the leaves and read and think and dream the hours away. Surely, here was a nest in the side of a rock.

Why could not that lovely home have been safe from the serpent? Have we not often asked that when we thought of the garden of paradise, and found no other answer than that God knoweth? But he does know. That is enough.

One day the girl with the pure heart went out of the home nest. It was a going that sent the arrow of sorrow deep into the hearts of the father and mother left behind. They had carried their loved one in their heart of hearts and no dream of danger ever had come to their unsuspecting souls. But that going brought Nancy a stained soul, a life as black as midnight.

Nancy Wellesley became a gambler. A woman gambler? We turn with loathing from a man who devotes his God-given powers

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to a profession so base; but the whole soul revolts from the thought of a woman debasing herself to such a depth, till her soul is all draggled over with other crimson sins of shame and passion. Up and down the world she went, luring men to their ruin on railways, on steamboats, anywhere, everywhere. It was a wicked, sin-cursed, blighted way, and Nancy trod it to the very lowest depths.

At first the stories of their daughter which went back to the quiet home among the pines stunned the poor old father and mother. Could it be that this was Nancy, their darling Nancy! What was this awful shadow which had come over them thus late in life? There by their home fireside the two sat, broken-hearted, hand in hand, looking into the flickering embers, their very souls crying out for sorrow.

O, if there is any deeper agony of spirit than that which comes with the thought that the boy or the girl who has been so loved—loved by the mother even down into the valley of the shadow, loved by the father up to the very highest peaks of sacrifice—in the name of God, what is it? O prodigal son, O prodigal daughter, for the sake of thine own soul, for the

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sake of the Saviour who died for thee on the cross, the bitter, bitter cross of Calvary, all for thee, for the sake of the dear ones who are letting their hearts bleed out drop by drop for thee, stop! Stop, for just one little moment and think of the father and mother back home. Listen until thou hearest their lives dripping, dripping, dripping out to death for thee. Come to thyself once more. The husks are so dead and dry and the nights out on the moor so cold. Arise, leave the swine-fields and find thy way back home. There father and mother are waiting, waiting in the doorway, watching, hoping, praying for their dear one—for thee.

The father of Nancy went from the home among the lakes, hoping almost against hope that somewhere he might find the one who was lost. It was a fruitless quest: she had lost—she must have lost—her love for the old home and the things which used to make her so happy. On and on and on she went down the blistering road. The father and mother grieved their hearts out and died. The friends she had known turned against her. Life was only one long midnight round of sin and shame and loss. Loss? What else can a life

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like that bring? It may be covered up for a little while behind a smile, but in the secret place, when no one but God is near to see and to know, the soul that has thus sold itself under bondage to sin turns with disgust from all the flimsy things once hugged so closely, and blinding tears surely do fall.

And the net, the pitiless net of sin, steadily drew its cords about Nancy Wellesley. When they had been tightened to the last half-inch, there she sat in the gloom of a felon's cell. Deserted, alone. Deserted, alone? No, not yet! Jesus Christ never lets it come to that with the worst of us!

CUTTING THE LINKS OF THE CHAIN

And that word, spoken by the friend through the meshes of the steel which held Nancy Wellesley, proved to be the thing which cut the links of the chain which bound her! With all the love and the tenderness of a consecrated life, the young woman went from Nancy to the little company of girls to whom she was to speak, and she told them why that message had come to them out of the darkness of the prison. Tears fell from many an eye that day.

THE EAGLE'S ABIDING PLACE

Then one of the sweetest of them all, with the lovelight of Jesus shining in her face, asked: "Don't you suppose we could love her back to God?"

It was a heaven-sent thought. All in a body they went. They crept up close to Nancy; they kissed the tears away from her cheeks; they twined their arms about her neck; they told her the story of the love of the Christ, the love that reaches to the uttermost, and they did not let her go until love had wrought its sweet way in the life that had been withered and blasted!

The eagle had been set free. It winged its way back to the top of the rock.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SOUL'S SURE FOOTING

How true it is that every poor, hunted creature of this earth, when hope languishes and the chance of escape seems desperate, turns to the high places for safety. Even when no enemy the eye can see is near, if we set a flock of sheep at liberty on the low lands, if the ways are open, it will not be long before they will be away upon the heights. It is as if they knew somehow that the air is purer up there and life more secure.

"Have you seen the sheep to-day, laddie?" So the shepherd farmer asks his boy. And when the answer is, "No, father, I have not," as if by instinct the next word is, "We will look for them in the hill pasture beyond the wood, laddie." And almost always the mother sheep, with their little ones, are there, feeding peacefully on the sweet clover and resting at noonday in the shelter of the big sugar maples.

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In a way they surely understand, God has told them that the upper reaches are best.

"God bless all who come in and go out." So runs the inscription over the entrance to the Castle of Chillon, nestling on its isolated point of rock by Lake Geneva, in Switzerland. Now, centuries after it was built, this massive pile stands as one of the finest specimens of mediæval architecture in all Europe. Out of the solid rock was cut the moat for this cone-towered castle. So the place was turned into a little island. Nine hundred years have wrought many changes in the castle itself. Those who once took refuge in it—knights, servitors, cavaliers and ladies—all are gone now. The walls are moss-covered and ivy-grown. Blue bells droop in clusters from every crack and crevice: but the rock remains. We forget the dark scenes upon which these gray walls have looked and think only of the refuge the grand old rock has afforded to the hunted men and women of the long ago.

Daring hearts had the strange people who in some day, now in the dim and distant past, clambered up the almost perpendicular cliffs of our own western country and made their home. Three hundred feet up such a height,

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explorers have found in Arizona a deserted village of the old-time cliff dwellers. Who knows their story? Were they sore beset by foes, so that there was no more safety in the lower levels? Did they find the safety they sought up there in the side of the rocks? What ever became of these fugitives who fled from the valley to the heights of the rock up yonder? We love to think of them nestling up there, living, loving, hoping, dreaming in the clefts of the rock!

ESTABLISHED OF GOD

It may be that it was at almost the same time when the men of the American cliffs were perching in their hiding places that David was singing of his own sure refuge thousands of miles away, on the other side of the world.

It had been a time of stress for the young shepherd king. Without any seeking upon his part, David had been called from the upland pastures to be fitted for wider service. Already had he been anointed by Samuel, the faithful servant of the Lord, with sacred oil brought for that express purpose from the tabernacle at Nob. Already had Saul felt the sting of the prophet's words, "Thou art re-

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jected of God." Already had the younger man of the sheepcote been summoned to the house of the king, in the hope that by the charm of his harp he might drive away the frenzy of the fitful-minded Saul. Already had he escaped death by not more than a hair's breadth at the hand of the mad king, when the shaft went whistling past his head to stick in the wall.

There being no longer any doubt that it was the determination of the king to take his life, David knew that he must flee; but where could he hide? Would he be safe anywhere from the unreasonable jealousy of the king? Away to the hills of Philistia David made his retreat. He did not go alone. Fearing the insane wrath of Saul, the father and mother of David went with their son. Then, too, many daring spirits, not in favor with the king, found their way to the fastnesses of the border country, that they might have the leadership and the protection of David. And there, in a cave five hundred feet up the side of the mountain, shut away from the world, David waited calmly and with wonderful reliance upon God the next great step in the unfolding of Jehovah's plan for him—waiting in the

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loneliness, waiting in the dark, waiting for God's voice to call out of the shadows.

WAITING FOR THE LORD

It is not always easy to wait for God's sure leading. How well do I remember a day of sitting still that God might show me the way! I was a young man then, standing at life's crossroads. One way seemed to lead out into the deepest uncertainties. I did not want to go that way. How apt we are to think the line of least resistance is the course we ought to take! The other way, a little ray of light, like a sunbeam sheared from the great orb of day, shimmered through the darkness. That was the path I longed to take. But was it God's way for me?

I know what my mother would have done. Many and many a time when the stars seemed to be stripped out of her sky and no daylight was left anywhere, she would sit with the Book. If I had looked over her shoulder then, I am sure I should have found that these were the words which were giving her the strength to wait:

"The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength

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of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? . . . One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

"To inquire in his temple"! That was what mother would have done in an hour of uncertainty. It was always her way to inquire in the temple of the Lord. But how should I do that? Here I was, speeding away across the country in a railway train. No temple here! Only the click and the rattle of the wheels bounding from rail to rail and the indistinct hum of the voices of my fellow passengers. "To inquire in his temple"—how could I do that? I had then to learn that God's temple is in every place where a single soul waits for help. Then I thought of God's house as a place made with hands. Youth is not so quick to see God in field and forest, in mountain and valley, in rushing railway train; it sees him more clearly in massive walls or turreted cathedral, in the thunder of the cataract or the swelling of the ocean tides. There may the soul lean out and listen.

But not always can it be so. It was not so

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with me that day. No cathedral, no visible house of God, no roaring Niagara, no altar at which I might kneel. And yet something did come upon me there, as with closed eyes and bowed head I tried to feel that God was near to me, something which calmed my fast-beating heart and gave me to see that he is everywhere, and always ready to lead him who places his soul in the care of the Almighty.

As if I were not to question the next step in my life, I left the train at the nearest station and sent a message to one far away who would be able, could I get a response from him, to throw light over all my coming days.

It was a quiet little wayside station at which I waited. I never had been there before; probably I never will see it again. But it was the place where I met God, talked with him and he answered me. After the operator had ticked my message out across the world, I went out and walked up and down the railroad all alone, almost holding my breath, all the time wondering what the answer would be, but sure that it would be God's best for me.

Sometimes it seems to us that God takes a long time to shape his response to our prayers. We chafe, we grow impatient, we

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begin to doubt. Why must it be so long? Two or three times I went back to the office and inquired if any word had come for me. Several hours went by that way. It began to appear that I must stay in that lonely place through the night, although I had hoped to take the next train on. I went out and prayed for patience. It seems to me now as if that whole day were a day of prayer. Ah! through how many days and nights since then have I prayed and waited!

But the message came. I did not doubt then, I do not doubt now, that it was straight from God. It changed all my way. It brought me unnumbered blessings, although it did close up for me the way I would have chosen—the way of the sunbeam's ray—and led me straight out into the shadows of uncertainty, which I had to follow for a long time before the light appeared. But the light did appear. God led me out upon a new way and set my feet in the road that was best for me.

OF GOOD COURAGE!

I love to think of David up there in his mountain cave. It must have been a wonderful experience for the young man who had

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been brought up on the sunny uplands and the starlit pastures of Bethlehem. Out there were the sheep and the flowers and God. Here no flowers, not even the lambs of the flock. Could he be sure that God was here? Ah! David never asked that question. Listen as his soul breaks out in joyous praise and thanksgiving: "Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have any being." How can you do it, David? Up there on the footpaths with no cloud in the sky, when life had no seamy side and hope sang a cheery song, it would not be hard to let the soul go out in such hymns of rejoicing. Easy now to think and to say, "The Lord is good; his mercy endureth forever." When the waves lap the shore gently and the wind dies away to a whisper, the storm is forgotten. All seems well. It is when the tempest is on the deep and dark billows dash mountain high that we hide our faces before Jehovah. It is heart-breaking storm now with David. But how is it with our uncrowned king, as he sits there amid the gloom of the cave? Surely now, if ever, his heart will think of God as a being

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awful in his majesty and fearful in his power. Now his songs will take on a sadder strain, breathing out something of the trouble which is racking the man's soul. Ah no, David! I do but greatly misjudge thee. I am measuring thy spirit by my own short yardstick. Let me stand still now, and catch the notes of thy morning hymn, as it drifts to me from the depths of that shadow-dimmed cave of Adullam:

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.”

Not a rift in the lute! These surely are the

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outpourings of a heart filled to the full of joy and peace and trust.

"How canst thou thus sing, David, our king? Is not this a time for doubt and dread and fear? Thou singest of faith and hope and thanksgiving." So may the men of that exile band have questioned their brave leader, pressing close upon him and seeking to get something of his cheer into their tired hearts.

True and brave and earnest the response of the singer looking up into the faces of his followers by the flicker of the torches. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord."

O thou brave singer of the undaunted heart, if we could but learn the sweetness, the help, the inspiration of those words, "Wait on the Lord"! We are so tired with our hurrying on ahead of God. How can we wait for him to bring us things for which we have been longing so many weary days and so many, many nights when our pillow has been wet with tears? We believe he will not let our prayers go unanswered, but it seems so long, so very, very long, to wait. The days fly

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swifter than a weaver's shuttle; and still they seem to creep away, so sore is our heart with its waiting! Sundown is almost here and no sign yet of the realization of the dream which has possessed us so long.

Sing thy song to us once again, thou shepherd harper of Israel! Touch the strings with surer and ever more sure hand! Cheer us and teach the blessedness of patient waiting.

"Wait on the Lord." "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

CHAPTER IX

HIGHER, STILL HIGHER, TO THE ROCK

DAVID, like most men, had his hours of depression. When we think of all that happened to him, of the slippery places into which his own passionate heart led him, we cannot wonder that days should come to him when his thoughts drifted into very gloomy channels, when the skies hung gray above him, and when the harp-notes of joy were changed for strains that were fairly piteous in their cadence. And then, too, the difficulties into which sin plunged the people of his kingdom sometimes stirred the soul of the singer to hymns of pleading for forgiveness. It must be that it was in some such time as this that David penned the sixtieth psalm. Listen to the sob in his voice: "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh. Thou hast showed thy people hard

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things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment."

But it was not like David long to forget God's promises, and soon the heart of the psalmist turns to some of those which have in times gone by been a stay to his soul and kept his heart from breaking: "Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies."

Higher and still higher the song rises: "Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

WHEN MEN MUST BE LED

Suffering from a disease which had been pronounced incurable, a poor heathen man heard of a missionary long miles away who was possessed of medical knowledge which would enable him to cure many otherwise hopeless cases. Feeling his way along in the dark, one day the poor man fell across the threshold of the physician, begging in a most pitiful way for help and recovery of sight. It was the same old cry which so often came to the ears of the Great Physician in the days of his flesh. He heard it on the road to Jericho, when the man of the sightless eyes called out,

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so desperately, "Lord, that I might receive my sight!" It is the cry of thousands upon thousands going up to-day from the lips of men who have paid with their sight some part of the awful toll of the war across the sea. "O God, if I might but see once more!"

And the physician brought his skill to bear upon the sightless man of the heathen heart, so that the day came when he was able to go back with joy in his soul to his own people. In a little while a wonderful thing took place. Looking out of his window one day, the doctor saw coming down the road the most wonderful procession his eyes had ever beheld. Holding fast to a long rope, scores of men were slowly making their way along the dusty highway, straight toward his house. At their head, leading the way, was the man whose sight had been restored under God through the skill of the missionary doctor. When the long line at last came near enough so that the doctor could look into the faces of the men, he saw that every one of those who were holding so tightly to that rope was blind! He who had been healed had made his way back home and told the story of his restoration to sight, and all this multitude which had been grop-

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ing on in the shadows so long besought their friend to bring them to the doctor, that he might do for them what he had done with God's help for their neighbor. Blind! Needing some one to lead them to the light!

LEADING AND LED

When the road is new we must have some one to show us which way to go. Over trackless ocean, through the deeps of the forest, across the ice of the polar seas, up the steepes of the snow-clad Alps, everywhere and always we need a guide. From life's end to life's end it seems as if God means that we shall feel and know the peace and the comfort which comes from putting the hand deep in the hand of another and saying to him: "I do not know the way. My feet never before have been this way. Lead me along this path lest I stray and be lost." And after we have learned the way, does not he want us to realize the joy there is in piloting somebody else? Is there any greater happiness given to mortal man than that which comes from bringing some dear one up the steepes of Calvary, on past the cross, farther still until we have passed the place where the dear Lord lay, and

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come to look through tears up into the face of the Redeemer—saved, ransomed, redeemed, a child of God?

HOW CAN WE DO IT?

The way of service—what is it? How can we find it? Once found, will not strength, wisdom, and grace fail us before we have been able to see the end for which we long? It is grand to serve, but our strength is very small!

Ah! these are not questions which ought to disturb us. Love in the heart can do all. The thing we really need to ask is, "Do I love? If I do, then I can do all."

It is thirty-six miles from Boyle to Marshall, Arkansas. The road has many a turn; and still, a man who has been blind since he was a little boy made the journey on horseback all alone, yet unafraid. Alone? What about the dog which trotted by the side of the horse all the way? In the morning the blind master fastened his little four-footed favorite to the bit of the horse's bridle by a chain. Then he climbed up into the saddle and pointed to the keen-witted animal which way he wanted to go. Once sure of the road, the dog took the highway, bound for Marshall.

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When they came to a turn, the animal would turn and trot back and forth watching the beckoning of the master's hand, to the right, to the left; then on he would go, tugging at his chain to bring the horse around to the proper course. So they all reached the desired destination at last. Only a dog—but he could lead the way for a man!

OUT OF THE FATHER'S HOUSE

Why he went God only knows. He had a good home. His father was kind to him; never was there a mother more kind. A dear brother and a loving sister were his companions in the home. All that heart could wish was his. If he had been true to himself, the day would have come when the door leading up to a successful business would have swung open for him.

With all the strength of a good man's heart, the father had longed that his son might become a minister of the gospel, and he had planned the boy's studies somewhat with that end in view. Several times the young man had gone out into the country and taken part in leading religious services at schoolhouses and small churches. Here he had enjoyed the

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experience of seeing men and women who had been groping in the darkness spiritually find their way out into the light and of hearing them say with tears in their eyes as they took him warmly by the hand: "Thank you. You have helped me to-day." A few times he had been invited to speak in large city churches. He found a certain degree of happiness in work of this kind, and yet, he turned away from it. Why?

Was it some book which he read that awoke in his heart a desire to know more of the world lying beyond the hills of his father's quiet country home? Was it some word from a man he chanced to meet by the way? Did some visitor from the unknown out yonder bring to the farm wonderful tales of the success which awaits the young man who steps out bravely into the world, challenging it to give him its best? Or was it none of these, but a call from his own heart to go out and see what fortune holds in store for souls that are courageous? It may have been any one of these; it may have been none of them. God knows. At any rate, he became dissatisfied with the round of the days at home. So he went out, not knowing whither he was going.

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Mother's kiss was still moist and warm on his pure lips when he stepped over the threshold. Father's face was very pale when he took his boy by the hand for the last time and bade him Godspeed. The son could not help thinking that he seemed to have grown suddenly gray and old. For a moment something tugged at his heart; but a little package which lay in his hand when he drew it back from holding that of his father led him for an instant to forget the look in the old man's face. "You may need it, my boy, before you find something to do: and do not forget to write home. Let us know if you ever want mother or me. Your room will always be waiting for you. You will find the door always unlocked whether you come day or night."

Who but father and mother ever would think of that? On the hill by the little white-wood tree he turned and looked back. Yes, there they were, just as he knew they would be, still standing in the doorway, watching their boy out of sight. They had opened their arms to let him go, but it was like tearing a beautiful plant up by the roots. How he had twined himself about their very souls!

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Yonder was the orchard. He had held the little trees by the top when they were set out, while father drew the earth carefully in with his hands, sifting the soft earth through his fingers, so that the tiny rootlets might have a better chance to live in the new environment. Then he was a little boy. He had lived to see those trees come to fruitage. Were ever apples finer? How he enjoyed them when in after days father and mother remembered to send him some at school! Those rosy-cheeked apples—he never could forget them.

Away beyond the orchard was the meadow, and still farther away the cattle grazing peacefully in the pasture. "I love them," he whispered to himself. "They are so honest."

But youth does not tarry long in backward glances. Its face is turned out into the world; and he soon pushed on, with a wave of the hand to the figures under the old porch and the determination swelling in his heart to do something great, something worth while, something that would make father and mother proud of their son. "Some day I'll come back, and not across lots either." No! Then he would dash up the road with his own shining equipage. All the old neighbors would rush

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to the windows to see him speeding homeward. Father and mother, brother and sister, should then realize what a man can do out in the great, mysterious world, for he knew he could do great things. The world should recognize his ability and bow at his command.

"WHICH THE SWINE DID EAT"

How it hurts when the letters from the boy away from home grow shorter and farther between! How formal they seem, and they were once so full of love and fervor! Between the lines the old folks can read the true story, the story of the life which stings and blights and kills. At first with this mother it was little more than a fear, an awful fear, a fear that sent her up to the little room she was keeping sacred to the memory of her boy, to kneel there all alone by the side of the bed, to sob out her prayers to God that her dear one might be spared and kept safe from all evil. To the father the effect was that of a stunning blow. He had never dreamed that his boy would bow down to sin, he was so clean, so strong, so pure. Not that he did not know all about the lure of sin upon the soul of the young man. He had himself felt the

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fascination of evil and seen its hands beckoning out and down upon the primrose path that leads to death.

And the seams grew deeper on the father's face day by day. The trouble in his heart stripped the rich brown from his head and planted the white of sorrow in its place! The tug at his heart robbed his hand of its steady grip, and he stumbled more and more as he followed the plow along the furrow. It does hurt so when the heart is bleeding out drop by drop for the boy who is down where the devil lurks!

So life came to be one day-long, night-long prayer! There were meeting places with God all round the old farm—in the haymow, in the little room upstairs, under the whitewood tree in the pasture, out in the sugar-bush—everywhere these well-worn places where sore hearts talked with Him who knows and sees and feels it all. Surely, not a sigh of these aching hearts was lost, for they still trusted God, through the shadows as through the sunshine.

Once more was enacted the tragedy of the son who "wasted his substance." Again came the filth of the swine, the dry husks, the

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burned-out manhood. But, thanks be to God for his matchless mercy, there did come a day when he lifted himself from washing the ooze and the slime out of a reeking spittoon to take out of the hand of a carrier a letter from home. Out of his trembling fingers fell the rotten spittoon! Up to the loft of the barn in the rear of the saloon he crept, and there alone he broke the seal of mother's letter.

"Nothing from father!"

It was the first time he ever had failed to find a message from father with that sent by mother. What had happened? Could it be that at last patience had come to its limit? Had forgiveness trickled out and the spring become dry? Had the love of father burned itself down to ashes and gone flickering out?

"Never! That would not be my father."

But what then?

There it was, all told in a mother's sweet way. In every line he could feel the sob. Father had turned the last furrow. Never again would he lie on his face up in the hay-mow, pleading for his boy. Out in the little plot on the hill the sun was shining calmly on a little mound that was not there a few days ago.

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"Tell our boy that I love him just the same."

"That was father's message to you; and you know the little room is waiting for you, my boy."

There was a bit of money in the letter—mother was so good. Tears were in his eyes, as he let the bill drop and read the letter over again. What was money when a heart was feeling its way through a sorrow like this?

And something laid its grip on his soul, something that had not been there before. He picked up the money.

"I will take that money and use it as father would want me to use it. I will go on with the work he wished me to do. I will take the back track, and I know I shall find God where I left him."

And he meant it then. He climbed down the ladder with mother's letter in the pocket just over his heart, and in his hand the money father and mother had saved, fully determined that he would fight his way through the seminary course and give all that was left of his life to telling the story of God's redeeming love.

"Then came that wicked one." With this new born resolution in his heart and that

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blood-bought money in his hand, he went back into the saloon and drank and drank and drank, until he lay in the filth on the floor in a back room to which he had been dragged by some one whose only interest in him was to get him out of sight!

THROUGH DARKNESS

Of the days which came next, the sin-tossed man never could give any very clear account. He seemed like a ship stripped by the storm of every sail, rudderless, without a pilot, hurled hither and yon by wind and wave. Once he was conscious of saying to himself, "I will arise and go to my father's house"; and then it came to him with overwhelming force that he had no father now. Perhaps the Great Father had deserted him too. Bitterly the thoughts came to him: "You have no father! No one cares for your soul. You are not worthy even of the husks which the swine do eat."

You and I know that this was only a taunt of the spirit of evil. Such comfort is all that Satan ever has to give the one he has ruined. And how it did cut this proud-spirited young man to think that for a few days of selfish

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indulgence he had bartered his soul and everything else that was dear to him! Rags, shame, sorrow, pain—this was all he had left to show for the priceless treasures with which he had parted. Thus does sin mock its victim.

So up and down the world he went, sometimes sleeping out in the open country, with the pale light of the moon and the glint of the stars to keep off the shadows. Glad was he when night found him under the friendly shelter of a hedgerow; sometimes fate was not so kind as that to him, and he laid his tired body down by the side of some barroom stove, his weary soul growing more sick and sore with the passing of the days. Hungry, worn to the quick of nerve, he lost all sense of hope. Faith had flickered out in its socket. All that was left was loathing and disgust.

Sitting that way one day, by the glow of an early winter fire, his head far down on his breast, his eyes closed, he was thinking of home and father and mother. A tear found its way out and trickled down his cheek. God saw that tear!

The young man was sure he felt a hand on his shoulder. It seemed like a friendly touch. He looked up, half expecting to see one of his

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kind, and he wondered if he would be invited to go up to the bar and take another drink of the stuff that kills, the while it promises happiness. But this was not a face of that sort. The eyes which looked down into his were kindly and the smile played about the mouth of the stranger.

"Come on, old friend; let's not stay here any longer. This is no place for you and me."

"Old friend!"

Did this man really mean that? When had anybody called him by that sweet name of late? Surely, it must be the newcomer did mean it, for this was not the face of one who would hurt a fellow mortal. This was a good man. He pulled himself to his feet. How sore they were! Every joint cried out in misery. The nights on the chill ground; the long tramps, beginning where the night before had found him and leading no whither; the wretched life he had lived, all had conspired to take the spring of early manhood out of him and had left him a poor, crippled, broken-down beggar.

But this hand which held his own so warmly, these eyes beaming so cheerily into his own, this kindly summons to go out and

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away to something better—how could he resist the impulse to rise and follow? And the wonder became more intense. A little way along the street up which they went arm in arm—a street which somehow had a familiar look, an appearance strangely like something he had once known—listening like one in a dream to the clear, helpful voice, he realized that he was being half lifted into a sleigh. At this he was moved to question.

“Where are you taking me?”

It did not seem as if this strong, mild-voiced man could possibly be taking him prisoner. That thought came to him with startling force, however, he had so many times been hurried away and thrust into reeking cells. The thought of those vile places brought a mighty fear to his heart. A chill came over him. The man on the seat by his side felt the tremor and pulled the heavy robe up more closely.

“Pull it clear up over you, old fellow. Cover your head, if you will. The air is chill to-night. We feel the first wintry days most of all. Don’t worry about where we are going—just keep warm. I’ll bring it out all right.”

And the wanderer could not but do as he

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was bidden. He submitted when the stranger took off his own great coat and wrapped it about him and tried to get still farther down under the blankets until his body and all but his face was covered.

This ought to be a road he should know. Sometimes it seemed to him he had traveled this way. Had he not before now rested under that tree when the sun was hot? Out of the past something definite came pressing: this was—it must be—the way home! A great longing soon smothered by a mighty dread, but still shot through with a hope he had not lately known, seized upon him. How could he ever look into the pure eyes of his mother? It would kill her to see him as he was to-night. And then, how could he endure the sight of father's empty chair? He tried to speak to the driver and urge him to turn back—better the old haunts of sin than this purgatory of suffering.

"Stop now," he begged. "I can go no farther. You know me—I'm sure you do. And you know what it would do to my mother if she should see me to-night. Let me out now, or take me back to the city. I'm not fit to go home."

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"Don't say it, old fellow. It will be all right. You just don't know your mother, that is all. Don't you know she loves you?"

"I know she did, but she could not if she should see me." Was ever such bitterness in any man's soul?

"You will know better about that very soon now."

Yes. This certainly was the old home. It seemed as if not a thing had been disturbed since the day he went over the hill yonder. He looked up toward the whitewood tree. Its outlines stood clear in the moonlight, just as they did in the long ago. The barn, the old well-curb, the deep porch—how well he knew them all!

"I must go on alone, if I am going at all." He was yielding to the spell of bygone days. "I thank you for what you have done; but now, I beg of you, go no farther! You must not."

"But you will go in, won't you?"

Did that mean that he was afraid the wanderer would even now slip away and go back?

"You know—don't you?"

"Everything, old friend; and I know what a mother's love can do."

HIGHER, STILL HIGHER, TO THE ROCK

The horse had stopped. The dazed man began to strip off the great coat.

"Leave it on, won't you? I don't need it. It will help to——"

"Cover up some of the rags, won't it. That is kind of you. But it would not be right. She must know some time. It may be as well now."

But the friend insisted and the prodigal stood alone knee-deep in the snow a moment later, watching the sleigh disappear toward the city. Once he took a step that way himself, as if he must even now go back into the old life. How could he go back to that pure, dear mother?

A gentle breath of wind blew across his face. How often he had known it to do that, even in the dead of winter! From some warmer current such a puff would be torn out of the sky to drive back the chill. With that touch of warm on his face the thought came to him that this had been one of the things for which he had been longing for years. Had not his very soul burned itself out in longing for the old home? Surely, he must go in. It would be the wildest sin he ever had committed to creep away now.

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"He trusted me to go on. I'll do it."

And yet, with his foot almost on the door-sill, he shrank back. He went a little farther out from the house and plodded round the yard. He forgot that his feet were soaking wet and half frozen.

"I'll sleep in the barn to-night. In the morning I'll see mother! I'll be stronger then. Maybe she can endure it better than too."

He started toward the barn. Just then a light flashed out of the window of his old room. A woman held the lamp in her hand a moment, then she set it down on the window sill.

"Mother!"

His hands went up to his head. How pale she was! Every hair had been turned white by the sorrow of the years. But how dear the face was to him! Leaving the lamp still on the window ledge, she turned and knelt by the side of the bed—his own bed—kept so long just as it had been when he was a boy.

And that was enough. Love had conquered. He ran up the steps and knocked at the door. But he did not wait for her to come down. He hurried in and dashed up the stairs to take her in his arms—led back home by love!

HIGHER, STILL HIGHER, TO THE ROCK

How God does cling to the child of promise!
He did not let this ransomed soul go! He
fanned into life once more the blaze of deter-
mination to become a minister of the cross!
The school work was again taken up, and the
day came when he went up the pulpit stairs in
his own appointed church and preached his
first sermon from David's passionate lines:
"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

"O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shall tearless be.

"O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

(George Matheson.)

CHAPTER X

FORGETTING THE ROCK OF STRENGTH

NEAR the old house where we passed the summer one year, in days gone by there had been a garden. The day came when the little plot of ground was very much neglected. Instead of bearing a great part of the vegetables which had been needed by the family which had occupied the place, it began to slip backward. The family moved away and the house had stood vacant for a year or two. No one had worked the garden, but old mother nature had been busy trying to make the bit of earth as productive as she could. The result certainly was wonderful, for it afforded ample proof of the dear old dame's power to make two plants grow where one had been before. In fact, many times one stalk sprang up as if nature intended to occupy until a better tenant came. What a sight that garden spot was! No longer sweet corn and beans and sugar peas grew there, but the rankest of weeds, and in almost endless variety! We

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used to stand on the border of the tiny spot of ground and try to imagine how many different kinds of weeds really did find that earth congenial.

One day the mistress and master of the farm determined that they would make a careful canvass of those plants and do their best to classify them. It was no easy task, for nature had been very busy scattering her seeds in that neglected spot. We brought out our old books on botany and ransacked them and delved deeper still into the nooks of memory. Many and many an hour did we spend in that interesting piece of work. Do the best we might, in the end there remained a few plants which we could not identify. These we sent away to the State Experiment Station for examination and classification. When all was done we were astonished to find that no less than thirty distinct species of plant life had somehow gained a foothold in that little bit of ground. From garden to weedpatch—what a transformation!

HOW DID THEY COME?

Over and over we asked ourselves the questions, "How did all those weeds come to be

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where they were? Where did the seed from which they sprang come from?" Surely, there must have been a germ for every plant, for something never comes from nothing. So we began to study the methods by which different seeds travel and found it exceedingly pleasant and profitable. On the wings of the wind some take their flight. Have we not all watched the fluffy thistledown sailing so silently through the air of a quiet autumn day? Other seeds drift over the snow in winter time; traveling far in a few hours of time. Others are carried by the birds on their journey across the country. Still others come in the seed the farmer buys and sows on his land—smuggler seeds, stealing in to make us trouble. So in one way or another all these seeds must have journeyed from place to place, on and ever on, until at last they found a resting place in the congenial soil of the old garden; and here they were, thistles and burdock, broad-leaf plantain and ragweed, wild mustard and sheep sorrel—rioting rascals of the plant world, taking advantage of the master's absence to get a foothold where they never ought to have been. Strangely significant too, that after all of us had done our best

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we were compelled to say of a number of the plants, "Unknown."

Many of the plants we had been so interested in were beautiful in spite of their associations. The moment we took them into our hands, from the tender leaves broken from the stalk would come the sweetest perfume, as if the severed stems were pleading with us not to cut them off nor tear them from their pleasant surroundings. But right in among these lovely plants we would find others which were decidedly noxious. So down they all had to come, the bitter with the sweet, the rare and the beautiful with the ugly and the poisonous. With the coarse and the useless must go the fragrant and the graceful. And one morning, when the plants were all wet with the dew, we swept them down with a scythe and raked them up to be borne away and when dry burned to ashes. So the ground was stripped of its burden of weeds and made ready for the workman and his plow and his pure seed once more.

THE PERIL OF THE NEGLECTED GARDEN

A half century of prosperity had eaten the heart out of God's people. The very blessings

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he had bestowed upon Israel had been the means of corrupting and demoralizing and undermining the spiritual life of the nation. It was the same old, old story. More and more men were turning away from God, back to idolatry, seemingly unmindful of the terrible fate which had always overtaken them in days gone by when they turned their backs on Jehovah. To the idols of their own invention the people had added the foul and degrading creations of the Syrians and the Phœnicians, by whose religious customs they had been strangely fascinated. With charming and yet startling imagery the prophet Isaiah pictures the situation:

“Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips.”

Ah yes! Crimson clover, sweet William, pinks and arbutus, mingled with thistles and bindweed and beggar-ticks! Ox-eye daisies and honeysuckles and azaleas, choked by cockle and sorrel and poison ivy! Jehovah's altar side by side with repulsive calves! The Holy of holies befouled by the presence of

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foul asherahs and Baal images! Beautiful hilltops from which the eyes might look away Godward and heavenward reeking with the awful rites of a worship than which none more debasing ever had been invented! Soil laid out for the growing of the loveliest in nature, set thick with the deadliest of vines!

How terrible the fruit of such a sowing! The vision of the old prophet, as it was given him by Jehovah, pictures the ending of the harvest. "In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow."

Aye, hedge it about as thou wilt, O sinful Judah, with as much of hope as thou mayest, until the bud changes to the flower and the flower to ripened grain, the harvest shall be lost in the hour of the in-gathering, for the sickle will cut all down together. The rake, God's great swift, sure rake, will gather up the whole in one mighty heap, to be burned and wiped out together.

THE GARDEN OF MY HEART

So have not I seen the garden of my heart

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laid waste? In the sunny days of my youth, when faith was strong and hope sang its sweetest song, with bounding pulses I took my way out into the world to turn up the furrows. There they lay, warm and glistening in the sunshine. Then I thought of nothing else than that some glad day my hands would gather rich stores from the seed sown on those brown furrows! How could it be otherwise? Had I not done my plowing and my harrowing and my sowing well? With heart leaping with joy, with fingers all a-tremble with pleasant anticipation, I had planted my plants and watered them with the tears of an unselfish love. Surely, they must yield me an hundredfold. And I was so happy then, so sure that my little plot of ground would yield glorious returns when the harvest laid its sheaves at my feet—and it should have been so!

Yes, it would have been so had not I slept in the furrow. For a time I rose up early that I might stir the soil of my garden well. The dew was still on stem and stalk and leaf and flower when I hastened to my happy task. I watered my field. I let no foul thing get a foothold in it. I kept away every bird which

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came to peck my blossoms and steal them away from me. No worm nor thing that might sting was ever given a chance to touch one of my plants; and God blessed me while I toiled. He kept my heart pure and clean.

Then something lured me away from my purpose. In my soul sin sang a song that seemed sweet to me. I lifted myself from my knees between the rows of my own planting, the things I had loved so well. I leaned on my hoe and listened to the voice which said: "Why do you weary yourself thus? It is not necessary to put so much of yourself into these simple things. Look up and away a little while. The garden will still keep on growing. By and by, when you have rested yourself in the world's meadows, you will come back and find that all will be well."

And so the tempter won me from my flowers and my choice plants. It must be true that I was giving more time than I needed to give. I was tiring myself unnecessarily. I saw others who did not seem to need to keep such close watch over their little acre of land. They had time to rest their souls in the lap of pleasure. They could look up and laugh and give the days and the nights to joy. They were

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not afraid that it would harm the delicate fiber of their souls if they indulged in some things the world put before their eyes. They seemed to find sin's fountain to be very sweet. Why should I think that I must watch and pray and oftentimes fast, lest I should awaken some day and find that my garden spot had become a wilderness of weeds?

So I left the Book to lie on the shelf. It was but a book at best, like many another. Why not learn to know and think of God in other and more alluring ways? I shut the door between me and the old-time trysting place where Jesus had so oft met me and cheered me with his dear presence. I did more: I locked that door and hung the key in a place that seemed to me to be safe. What is prayer? So I asked myself. How foolish to fancy that One so strong, so stern in his justice, so unswerving in all his purpose can be moved by the pleadings of such a weakling as I? His ways are fixed! He is ever pressing on toward one great incomprehensible issue, and no voice of man can swerve him from it.

So I gave the world full sway in my soul—
God forgive me! I was like the men of Israel,

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no whit better. With my own hands I was littering the hills of life with the whited altars of Baal! My asherah had taken the place of the solemn altar of my God, and when I stole away from my sinful pleasures long enough to see how it fared with my lovely garden spot, my heart stood still within me at the spectacle that met my gaze.

From the four corners of the earth the seeds of death and ruin had come in, and the blasts of sin bore them swiftly to my soul's garden. The storms of passion swept them across desert waste and upland meadow and they rode on the breeze of temptation and doubt and fear. All the beautiful things, the things I had loved so well and cherished so fondly, were being choked to death by the evil weeds which had sprung up thus unbidden. The vinelike threads of sin were strangling the life out of them all—no golden harvest now!

When I put out my hand expecting to take a forget-me-not, I felt the sting of a nettle. What I thought would be a rose was changed into a thorn when I grasped it. The golden wheat I had hoped to garner was only worthless darnel. Where I dreamed that I would gather joy and peace and heaven, I found in-

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stead doubt and danger and loss. I heard the voice of God calling to me across a waste of sorrow :

“Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips. In the day shalt thou make thy plants to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.”

ALL NOT LOST

But is all, then, lost? Not yet. Thanks be to the God of our salvation, not yet! Though sin turn all into a heap of trouble, though evil may rive and rend and turn and overturn to the very depths of the soul, though the hot plowshares of pride and passion and prejudice may strike their furrows into the very life of my life, I know that God loves me still. It is not me that he hates, but the works which sin has wrought within me. So let me stand still and take the chastening which comes to me with patience, until the wickedness is all torn out of my nature and

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the soil once more cleared and made ready for the new sowing. Let me feel my way back to the place where I left the key to the holy place in which I used to meet my Saviour! May be I shall find that rust has eaten into my soul, but I know that key will hang bright on its nail, for while I was following the path of sinful indulgence, Jesus was coming night and morn to meet me as of old, and the door will be unbolted when I turn the key. I shall hear his sweet voice calling to me from the threshold, "Come unto me, all ye that are weak and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I shall feel the hand of the Christ upon mine, and he will lift me over the portal; so shall I know that all my sin has been forgotten, washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

Here, in the dear old place where I have found him so precious in the days gone by, let me renew my vows. Let me put my feet once more in his steps. Let me see him again through penitential tears. The garden of my heart let me sow again to wheat, and so shall there be corn for my God upon the mountains.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHADOW OF A GREAT ROCK

AT what cost does God prepare for the peace and the comfort of them that are his own!

In the southwestern part of the State of New York the traveler finds a most wonderful formation of rocks. Away up on the side of a hill, high above the valley of the Allegany River, lie great masses of rock made of mingled pebble, flint, and sand. Over a space of many acres these mammoth conglomerates are scattered. It startles one to think what a day that must have been when those immense rocks were torn from the recesses of the earth and flung out into the light of day. What was God's purpose when he stripped them of the thick covering of earth which had perhaps for many centuries hidden them? It certainly could not have been that he might display his power. That is not his way; he never wastes strength or time. All his work

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is done with a purpose. Ever he "knoweth the way he taketh."

Neither does it seem that he was tossing those rocks out of their place that he might reveal to man what treasures have been stored in the heart of the hills, ready for man's use when he shall need them. Whatever the thought of God, sure it is that in the shadow of those rocks many a little creature finds a hiding place in the day when he is sore bestead. So too has more than one visitor, overtaken by wind or storm, fled to their clefts and been safe until the tempest was overpast.

And is not he ever doing just such things as that for you and me? In the dark and stormy days that come to us, when life presses hard, so that we do not know which way to turn, he has a refuge in waiting for us, if we but know where to find it, a hiding-place prepared at great cost.

In the day when those blocks of stone were wrenched from the heart of the earth some tremendous force chiseled wide paths down through the stone. Through some of these passageways a considerable body of men might march abreast. Others are not so wide,

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scarcely permitting a single person to make his way through them on his hands and knees. Up and up above the surface tower those vast fragments far beyond the head of one standing below—ten, twenty, thirty, or even fifty feet. It was indeed a happy thought on the part of some visitor to call this the City of Rocks.

Over this great city made by Jehovah himself, sudden tempests sometimes sweep furiously. Then the traveler makes haste to creep under the shelter of some deep rock shelf to watch the lightning as it shears the clouds of heaven, to listen to the peals of thunder rattling among the peaks and crags about him, and to feel that he is secure from the shock of the storm. Strange if there should not now come an awe into his soul, or that he should whisper over again the words of the poet king: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress."

So do we flee to thee, thou Saviour of us all, in our times of distress. When the thunder-

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bolts of pain rack us through and through, when the lightnings of sin threaten to rive our very souls in twain, we make haste to thee and are safe, for thou, O God, art indeed a Rock of hiding to us, a strong tower and a fortress.

Is the thought too high for us? Do we stagger in the presence of a truth so beautiful and yet so overwhelming? God a "strong habitation"? God a "rock" and a "fortress"? How can that be? God knows how feeble is the grasp of the finite mind; and because he knows he repeats the truth over and over again, ever in plainer and more plain language, so that we may not miss its meaning.

So let me read on. More and more patiently let me linger over thy blessed Book. It is thy beautiful letter to me. It is the chart of my life. It makes me know that thou art indeed my Rock of defense, my Shelter in the time of storm.

"A man shall be a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of waters in a dry place; as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land."

A man shall be as a rock for the hiding of his fellows! The thought makes the heart

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strong! Strong at a time when we need strengthening so sorely. For man's faith in man in these dark hours has such a feeble grip on us! So now "Lead thou me on," on to deeper trust; on to richer faith!

NOT A MAN, BUT THE MAN

The deacon's son was gone out of his place in the neighborhood. Country people are quick to note such a change. It does not take long for the news to spread from farmhouse to farmhouse. And Jamie was one who would soon be missed when out of sight. Always when at home he was about his work. Everybody within sound of his whistle knew it. So too they knew his voice when he sang, for it had a true and substantial ring that won the heart of the listener. The big woods a little way from the house served as a great sounding board for the song he sent trilling from the fields. Far and away it echoed and reechoed, carrying cheer and gladness to the lives of the quiet country folk.

But now Jamie was gone. Suddenly, mysteriously he had disappeared. Everybody wondered, for he had ever been a home-loving lad. Who could remember his having been

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away like that before? Always father and son had been together in the past. Even as a wee laddie the boy had never failed to have a place by his father when the big wagon went rumbling to market, tucked up in a little bundle on the seat. Up through the years it had been the same story—always together like two bosom friends, which they must have been. It did the people good to see them each confiding in the other, standing up for one another, and both working for the common good. What wonder that the neighbors wondered about it, now that the father was left to go about the place alone?

For a long time no one ventured to speak to the father about Jamie's absence. The heart of the man of the country is kind and considerate. But when the deacon's face became pale and thin and careworn the people of the farms could scarce restrain themselves longer. What was the meaning of this mystery? What had happened in the once happy home? Where was Jamie, the sunny-hearted? Had they not a right to ask about it? Was not Jamie, at least in part, their own? Ought they not to go to the deacon and see what his sorrow was? Who could tell but he might

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just be waiting for that very thing? Still they hesitated.

Little by little the truth came out. Jamie was not away on a visit. No, it was not that. He might be across the sea, or he might be in the army. The deacon did not know. No message had been left behind by their boy; none had come since he went away. All the father knew was that for a long time his son had seemed to be greatly concerned over the trouble which had befallen the world, and the call of his country for men to help in its hour of need had weighed upon his soul. The deacon remembered now that often when he would be missing Jamie he was very apt to find him alone in his room, poring over the story of the great war. Nor did he forget that day when Jamie had asked, "Father, don't you think every young man ought to go and do what he can when his country is in this danger?" It struck terror to the old man's heart, but quickly, with something strangely like foreboding in his voice, he declared his opposition to such a thing.

"No, son; not every one. It is an awful thing, this business of war. God does not want it. You and I know that. Else, why

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does he say we are not to strike back, it matters not how many times another hits us? Don't you see it is peace, not war, he came to bring to the world, my boy?"

"Then why, father, does he say in another place, 'I came not to bring peace, but a sword'? If it were mother or me who had been hurt and ill treated, wouldn't you do your best for us?"

The deacon felt somehow that he had not made out a particularly strong case when he tried to show Jamie how mistaken the world is when it uses that word of the Master as a warrant for waging wars. He could not tell what effect his argument had had on his boy, but he did not like the look on his face, which seemed to become more and more determined each day. Every night after that the old man would slip softly up the stairs to look at Jamie lying there in his bed, so strong in his young manhood, and to kneel as long as he dared lest he might waken the boy, asking God to keep his son for him as the staff of his declining years.

It was a hard blow to the deacon when one night he stepped quietly into the room only to look upon a bed that was empty. The shock

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of the discovery seemed to take the form of some mighty hand gripping his heart and stopping its beating. And there by the side of the empty bed he could only voice the sorrow of his soul. Then, after awhile, he went down to tell the mother, and together the whole night through they tried to find comfort where there did not seem to be a single crumb. Why should such bitterness come to us? Why should a good God let such sorrows so hurt our spirits?

The deacon did not look for his boy. He knew that would do no good. Jamie was a man now, his own true-hearted boy, and yet, master of himself. Ah! there was one sharp thorn in the heart of the old man. How it did pierce to the very quick!

"If Jamie only had made Christ his Master!" This was his plaint to the mother of the lad.

"Jamie is a good boy, father! I do not think we need to worry about him."

"O, yes, mother, but—"

But mothers know much that they must never tell. Would it have been wise for the mother of Jamie to tell all her eyes had seen while their boy was yet with them? Of

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his love of country, which all the time was struggling to crystallize in positive service, making him to feel more and more that the time had come when his land had a deep claim upon his strength and young manhood? Should she have opened her heart then to her husband so that he might have known that it had been out of love for him that Jamie had never spoken a word of the determination which was taking possession of his heart? That while he was steadily coming to see his duty toward his fellows and to his country more clearly, his respect for the man who had carried him in his arms since he had been a baby kept from saying definitely what he felt he must do?

Mother though she was, there had been this shadow of uncertainty in her heart. Had Jamie ever seen anything in her which seemed to be an approval of his silent longing to go at the call of his country? Surely he could not have known that on the very day when he slipped out of the home she too had been on her knees at his bedside. Her hands had just finished the last kindly touches on counterpane and pillow. She had stood with tight-clasped hands, looking long at the still place

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where he had regularly slept since that first night when she had led him up to sleep alone under the rafters, and had given him anew into the keeping of God.

"Thou knowest, O God, that Jamie loves us, father and me. It is not out of unkindness that he keeps his heart from his father." It was not so easy to say the rest when she knew that the arrow had been sent from the bow and that the shaft had been winged straight at her own heart. For a long time she walked up and down that room before she could bend a knee. But at last loyalty to God overcame the mother love and she fell on her face, sobbing through her tears: "As thou wilt, O my Father. I open my arms to let him go. Jamie will be a true soldier. The land needs him. Thou needest him. So keep him, I pray thee, for I must have him back again."

Nothing of this could she let the father know. Now he needed support, not fearsome doubtings or ill based hopes. When he was out in the fields she might weep and pray as she would, but in his presence she must be brave. So it was, when her husband uttered that cry of longing at the thought that Jamie never had stood up before men and definitely

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given himself to God, that she could say very positively: "My husband, do you doubt that Jamie and God are friends? You remember that day when you read these words out of the Book, 'A man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' Jamie sat a long time looking at the firelight, and then he said: 'Don't you think, father, that means The Man? Who else could be a hiding place from the wind? Could there be any other Rock in a weary land?' And you recall how satisfied he was when you told him there was no question in your mind but that he was right. Yes, Jamie's heart is in His keeping. I am sure of it."

"And yet, mother, I have longed for the time to be when he would stand up before men and say it. We must not forget that it is 'with the mouth that confession is made' before men."

Did the deacon's conscience trouble him now that he had never urged Jamie to do that? He knew how sensitive his boy was, so he had not pressed him to take upon himself the vows of the church until he should feel the prompt-

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ings of the Spirit to do it of his own free will and accord. And Jamie had never come to that point.

"Some time," he had thought, "God will lead him that way."

But now it might be too late. If he only knew where Jamie was at that moment, he would go to him and do the thing he felt that he should have done long ago. If he might but have the chance to live over again that one day before Jamie went away, he would plead with the lad to make the great confession. He could bear it that Jamie should slip away through the shadows without saying what he was about to do, even if it well-nigh broke his heart. He had not a shadow of fear that Jamie would ever do anything that would bring a stain on the name of those who loved him. It was a thing to be proud of, so far as a man might take pride in a strife of the sword, that his boy should go and do the best he could to fulfill what seemed to him a duty. But his spirit was hurt because Jamie had never yet said to the Christ, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

Out in the meadow, by the side of the spring at which Jamie and he had so often quenched

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their thirst together on the hot summer days, under the wide-spreading trees of the tall sugar maples, down on his knees between the furrows, up in the sweet-smelling hay in the loft of the barn—everywhere he went the deacon kept thinking, “God help Jamie to say it.” His whole life now was one long prayer that somehow, somewhere, Jamie’s lips might come to speak the words of his heart. For is it not through confession that men have peace with God?

Thus the struggle went on until one day while down on his face the good old man was able, through the grace of God, to say: “Help Jamie to make the great confession. Then I would be willing that thou shouldest take him to thyself, if that seemed best to thee. If it should break mother’s heart and mine, that would be well, for then would we all be with thee.”

Waiting and praying, the deacon grew thinner of face and paler of cheek. It is so hard to watch for the letter which does not come. He lingered longer on his face at the evening hour. Long after his lips had ceased to utter his wonted prayer of praise and thanksgiving, he still knelt there with bowed

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head—so long that sometimes mother laid her hand gently on his shoulder, as if in fear lest he had gone away to God.

It was not strange that a time should come when the deacon would kiss his wife good-by and go away to find their boy.

“I must find him, mother! I must know how it is with him. If I stayed, you and I might go on ahead of Jamie. I want to stay till we know—”

The mother knew. She had seen the day coming. She raised no voice of protest when she buttoned his great coat about him and let him go out in search of Jamie. It meant loneliness such as she never had known before. It could not be doubted that the burden upon her heart would be heavier than her husband knew. Let that be as it might, if only the waiting brought some news of Jamie.

THE GREAT ROCK

The battle had left its aftermath of dead and wounded. The Red Cross had gathered up such as might be helped and placed them in a long building to wait the coming of the surgeons. There they were—the blinded, the mangled, the unconscious, those who were con-

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scious, bravely trying to keep back all signs of the suffering which they were enduring.

Walking between the long lines of the wounded soldiers an old man was seen. Not a face escaped him as he moved slowly along. His lips were pressed hard together, but his eyes were even now hopeful, as if expectant of something which might bring joy. Thus he moved slowly along between the rows of cots. Then his keen ears heard, or thought they heard, a low, "He cannot last long," and he grasped the doctor's arm and questioned back, "He cannot live?" and then added, "He must live!"—for this was Jamie!

For an instant the father trembled perceptibly, but the weakness passed quickly, and with a gentle hand he pushed back the tangled hair from the forehead and kissed the wounded boy. Then with a voice in which echoed all the tenderness of a father's love, he said: "O, Jamie, look at me! Look at me! If you can, my laddie!"

Surely it was in answer to this pleading—it must have been—that the lips did move a little. Low over the white face he bent himself to gather the lightest murmur of the life spark which was fast flickering out. "A man

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shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The grip on the father's hand grew tighter. For an instant the eyes of the boy were fixed upon the face above him.

"Father!"

Love, joy, pleading for pardon were all blent in that word.

"Jamie!"

It was all there, all the boy needed to make his going away full of peace.

"I knew you would forgive me, father! But it is good to hear you say it. You have been a rock to me! I love you so; but we must love Him best, for He is our Rock."

The voice was fading and the father spoke rapidly:

"O, my Jamie, there was nothing to forgive. Now I know you have made it right with Him. But can you not say it with me?"

And there in the shadows the father repeated slowly, and the son with him, the words of the greater confession:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: and in Jesus

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Christ, his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen."

Still back to the other cherished thought the words wandered: "My Rock—my Hiding Place—my Shelter from the tempest." The whisper went out with a smile.

The deacon lifted himself from his knees with a look of joy and peace on his face, for he knew that Jamie was safe in the shadow of the ROCK.

CHAPTER XII

HEWN FROM THE ROCK

WHEN the people of a great city out on the Western coast of the United States finished their wall of more than a mile in length, they were sure that they never again would have reason to be afraid that the ocean would trouble them by tearing down the barriers lifted against it and flooding their homes and places of business. Skilled engineers had studied out the plans for that new sea wall so carefully that they believed it would be impregnable; the workmen who carried out the designs dug deep for the foundation; experts mixed the cement which was to be used; the contractors reenforced the mighty bulwarks with stout arms of iron. One section of the wall more than eighteen hundred feet in length rose five feet high above the surface, while another stretch of four thousand feet averaged ten feet in height and was thick in proportion. "Now we can laugh at the sea;"

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so the people said and went to their beds to sleep in fancied security.

Watching the waves as they came thundering in, dashing their spray and foam half a hundred feet above the top of the tallest barrier, the dwellers of the city smiled and congratulated themselves upon the impotence of the Pacific Ocean to disturb the work of their hands. But they laughed too soon! It was the sea which laughed last. As if it had been battered down by thousand-pound projectiles, the beautiful bulwark crumbled into fragments! Aye, like glass it went to pieces, shattered and tossed about as a boy might tumble into ruins the row of blocks his playmate had reared. And the ocean came in to claim its toll of ruined homes once more. It is man who must retreat or build more securely.

Never yet has man been able to put up a barrier against flood or fire or frost or tempest which could not be thrown down by the tireless forces God has at his command. All over the world men have been trying to do this since they first began to pit their strength against that of the Unseen One; and all over the world their walls have gone down into dust. Just for a little while they have stood;

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then God touched them and they were no more.

ON THE PLAINS OF SALISBURY

Who set up those mysterious pillars of stone on the plain of Salisbury, England? When was it? What purpose did they ever serve? To all these questions the best of students must answer, "We do not know." There they stand, there they have stood, those huge sentinels, some of them more than twenty feet high, in a circle occupying the central portion of an area a hundred and twenty feet in diameter, and guarded all around by a rampart of earth and a wide ditch. Man may speculate and dream as he may, but those silent shafts probably never will give up their secret. They never have yielded to anything more definite than speculation. Whether they mark the scene of some ancient place of worship or whether they commemorate some event not otherwise marked in history, or whether they simply tell of the rallying place of soldiers of the long ago, we have no way of knowing, and it is idle to question.

Just one thing we do know of a surety.

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Stonehenge is being shaken back to ashes. Already many of the pillars have disappeared. Others are prostrate, broken at the base. All give sure signs that the unconquerable forces of nature are gnawing at them. Time never will be satisfied until the last stone has been ground into its original dust and scattered to the four winds of heaven. Were our ears but tuned to catch the sound, this would be the mandate we would hear: "Back to ashes! Level all things, earth, wood, stone. Grind everything to powder. Chisel, undermine, tear down all that man may plan, all his hands may make. Know that I am God, the One, Eternal. Only that which I build shall stand."

Only that! What, then, shall endure? What can last beyond the swinging of to-day's pendulum?

A BROKEN CABLE

The great Atlantic cable was dead. A man with a great heart had dreamed of linking the old world with the new, by a thread of wire dropped to the bed of the ocean. Through many a day and night of work and perseverance and patience his vision had been wrought

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out. At last the mystic cable was made and stretched from side to side of the ocean. Men on one continent stood at the cable's eastern end and held converse with men in the western world. It was wonderful, beyond belief.

But something had happened. One day the operator ticked his message out under the sea and there was no response. No answering click came back out of the ocean caves. The man at the key leaned back from his instrument, for it was powerless. The cable had been broken somewhere in mid ocean.

The story of the search for the place where the cable had parted and the tale of the long-continued and discouraging efforts to bring the severed ends together form one of the most thrilling chapters ever written in the book of human endeavor. But at last the seemingly impossible was accomplished. Up out of the depths of the ocean, by the aid of grappling hooks, the broken strands were lifted and carefully welded together once more. Again the cable was dropped back to its cold bed at the bottom of the ocean. Now the electric spark flashed into the water on the American side awoke a corresponding spark away on the coast of England. Once more the cable was

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alive. Once more friend could hold converse with friend a thousand miles away. Once more one of God's most wonderful laws had been brought out into the light. Link touching link, the whole chain throbs with power!

THE CHEERIEST OF MEN

The cheeriest man I know is a man of the open country. All day long he is busy about his work. As he follows his plow his heart goes out in song, varied now and then by a whistled tune. True and straight and deep are the furrows he turns. Oftentimes before the sun has swung its course to the western sky his feet, grown heavy from the steady trudging from field's end to field's end, stand for a moment while his gaze turns homeward, his hands lying lightly on the handles of his plow. Away down yonder in the valley a dear one is watching from the doorway. With uplifted hand he waves a signal. Quickly comes back the answering sign. A smile comes over the sunburned face. For a single moment he kneels down just where he is in the brown, sweet-smelling furrow. His heart is high and lifted up toward heaven. His lips are parted in a prayer of praise and

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thanksgiving. Another message has been sent across the blue and God hears and answers. New fire comes into the soul of the patient worker. With a new song he rises to go on with his appointed task.

To-night when this man goes home through the shadows, little feet will run to meet him. Tiny arms will be lifted up to welcome him. Stooping he will receive the warm kiss of his dear ones. The flower he has picked from the meadow grass on the way home he will place in the hair of the wife who comes down to greet him. Many a neighbor passing will wave him a hearty good cheer. The day's work done, around the table the little band will gather, and One will be in their midst.

SEVERED LINKS

It was not always so with this earnest toiler of the farm. Ah, the sorrow of it! But let us not speak of it now. Let it be even forgotten. For God is very good. So little good ever comes from recalling the sickening details of a broken life. Just give all this a passing glance and let us hasten on. It was the time when the cable snapped. Was it some storm of evil which wrenched his life

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out of the keeping of God? Was it a temptation which proved too strong? Did passion sweep over the once white soul and leave it cut off from all that is good and pure and beautiful? Who knows but God, and it does not matter now.

The joy of it all is that God did not forget the broken chain! Up in heaven he felt the slackening of the strands which had been severed. He tried to call to his child through the blackness of the tempest, and no answer came back. Sin had cut off the beautiful thread which had linked heaven and man. But, thanks be to His holy name, it had not cut off God's law. That sin can never do. It may plot in hell's deepest and darkest recesses; it may concoct its most devilish schemes; it may hunt man from the cradle to the cross, but it never can outdo the love and the patience and the tenderness with which God will follow his loved one, seeking until He has found the sheep which was lost, and laying the poor, bruised, torn, and sin-sick thing on his bosom and hurrying all the way back to the gates of paradise, rejoicing that the straying lamb has been found.

No! God will never stop looking and long-

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ing and hoping for the soul which has wandered away from the Father's house. Through the mists of the storm, he will feel along the ocean depths with his grappling hooks of mercy until he finds the broken cable ends that have for a little moment been torn from his grasp! He will hold them fast until repentance and love and pardon have welded the severed links once more. And once more he whispers his messages of hope and peace and joy across life's waste. The night is past. The day-star has appeared.

Sin and storm and frost and rust may pull down the best that man can do, but God's love standeth sure. Men may regard our iniquities in their heart and remember them against us; God never!

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

Sing on, then, O man of the plow and the sweet-scented furrow! For thee God sent his Son all the way from glory to Calvary. That thou mightest be ransomed from the power

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of sin he gave his Only-Beloved to die, to rise, to lift thee and me up to the shining gates. Thy peace, thy pardon, thine everlasting crown have all been purchased.

Love has hewn out for thee a Rock which neither storm nor time can touch. For love does last, and it is the only thing which does endure.

CHAPTER XIII

BROKEN BY THE HAMMER FOR SERVICE

AIR all a-quiver, earth trembling under foot, the very breath one breathes hot with that rapid succession of sounds—"What is it?" I ask of a man who lives almost under the shadow of the great factory.

"You mean what is it that make the loudest of the sounds? It's the hammers down yonder, sir. They do make a terrible noise, if you are not used to them, don't they? But they do a lot of work that might never be done without them."

And I could well believe that as I stood afterward and watched those ponderous steam hammers, pounding out their part of the day's work. Now the great mass of metal darts downward, delivering its blow on the bed of steel under it, as if hurled by some force truly titanic in its power. The very ground shakes as if under an earthquake shock. The next

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instant the strokes fall more lightly, so lightly that they seem like a mere tapping on the solid plate of the machine. Scarcely do they touch the piece of steel lying there so helplessly. I almost pity the senseless fragment. Why must it be thus beaten and crushed and pressed from one form to another? I looked at the man who was doing it all. There he sat calm, steady, watchful. With one hand he held a small lever. As he shifted this one way or another, so the blows rained hard and fast or more softly and slowly upon the metal which was being fashioned. One moment the piece of steel lay there, warped, twisted, almost shapeless; the next, by the blows of the hammer, it had taken on a form of definite beauty.

Not all at random, then, I thought, is this work. Out of the midst of this thunder and deafening clatter a great purpose is being wrought. Somewhere there is a pattern, and after that pattern something fine is being fashioned.

Everywhere I walked about that great factory it was the same. Iron from the mountains yonder was undergoing marvelous transformation. Heated until it was red-hot, run into deep, dark molds, cut and sawed and

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torn and pulled in every direction, pounded and drawn out as fine as a spider's web—and all that it might go out somewhere into the world and be used of men.

THE HILLSIDE QUARRY

I climb the hills to a quarry of rocks. As in the factory below, men here are wielding hammers. I miss the great engines run by steam or electricity, and still I cannot but see that a marvelous work is being done by these smaller hammers swung by the arms of brawny men. There they sit all day long, pounding, pounding, pounding on the heads of their drills, sinking deep holes into the heart of the rock. When they have done their work and gone on to other beds of stone, I see another force of workmen coming to drop into the holes made by the drillers charges of powder or dynamite. In fancy I see these awful servants of humanity at their part of the work. I know that when they explode, they will rive and tear and rend the now solid rock, but only that it can be used.

I follow those blocks, torn from the quarry by hammer and explosive down the hillside. Here men are chipping away the rough cor-

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ners, chiseling the lines into perfect form. By the eye of my soul I see those blocks, broken by the hammer, as they rise round by round, course after course, until they stand in city or town, cathedrals, temples of art, places of business, homes of wondrous beauty. And I know it never could have been done had it not been for the thunder and the breaking of the hammer.

THE VISION OF THE PROPHET

Wonderful fancies were given of God to his prophets. Think of the imagery of Jeremiah. How charming it is in its beauty, how forceful in its purpose! With all, it is simplicity itself. Sheep, meadows, pastures, springs, plants, streams, all kinds of living creatures and nature's works—these become to him really living, moving, sentient things, instruments revealing God's thought to his children.

Designing men whose purpose it was to trick and deceive, in the guise of divinely sent messengers, had found their way to Israel. They had lured many away from Jehovah with lying lips and seductive promises. God saw their deceptive plotting and says that

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these men hoped thus to "cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor." But, he declared, they should all be like the chaff as compared to the wheat. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

Swiftly the mind runs back to the giant hammers, thundering out the will of the workmen who handle them in the shops. Steel shaped by the massive machine, rock crushed by the hammer, and all that there may be added beauty and usefulness.

LIFE UNDER THE HAMMER

Somewhere I have heard the story of a young physician who came to a small town to take the place of a doctor who had recently died. The old man had lived in that quiet country place for many years. So faithfully had he wrought that he had won the hearts of all the people. His service had been one of love, and it had brought him more love than he had given, for giving is truly living. The young man had not been married very long, and there was much speculation on the part of the people as to what the new wife would

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be like. What would be her character? Would she not bring from the world outside something of the thrill of the society she was leaving behind? Surely, she would create a great sensation in every circle of society.

And the town put on its very best to receive the new doctor's wife. On tiptoe, eager with expectation, the maids and matrons watched for her entrance into society—their little society—for which they hoped so much under the leadership of the newcomer. They were sure that she would be dressed in the height of fashion. Her fingers would flash with costly rings. At her throat beautiful gems would glitter. She would be proud and stately and beautiful, just as a society queen from the great world outside ought to be.

On a certain day the doctor's wife gave a reception. All eyes were bent on the door through which she was expected to come. But when at last she came quietly in, how quickly all the fancies and the imaginings took flight. She was different from anything they had ever supposed she would be like. A little wave of disappointment ran round the room; for she was a plain little body, clad in a dainty gown, no rings on her fingers, no jewels at her throat.

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No glittering diamonds, no tortoise shell comb fastened her hair. She held a rosebud in her hand. She seemed more plain and simple than the plainest girl of all the country-side. And the guests went away feeling that somehow they had been cheated by the new doctor and his wife.

But little by little they changed their mind. The quiet woman won her way into the heart-life of the people. Very rarely was she present at any of the society events of the neighborhood; but if there was trouble anywhere, there she was to be found. The poor and the sick and the sore of spirit sought her, for they knew that the touch of her hand would bring them peace and calm and rest.

A few months after her coming a lad was badly hurt in a coal mine near the town. Willing hands lifted him and brought him out of the darkness and laid him on a bit of straw in a tumbledown shanty, there to remain until such time as the doctor could be found and brought to him. When the messenger sent to summon the doctor arrived at the latter's home, the physician was away in the country in response to a previous call; but the young wife threw a shawl over her head and walked

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all the way to the place where they had left the boy, the distance being more than a mile. When she reached the cabin she found a few miners gathered about the cot. They respectfully made way for her when she came in. One who was there says that the doctor's wife knew from the first that there was no hope for the injured boy; but she wiped away the blood and did all she could to make him comfortable. Listen to the story as it is told by a friend who went with her to the old house: "She knelt beside the cot, and taking the boy's hand in hers, sang very softly, 'Nearer, my God, to thee.' Tears fell from the eyes of every man in the room, most of whom had not heard that hymn in many years, as the sweet-voiced woman knelt there in their midst. Then she kissed the forehead where the death damp was fast gathering, and spoke to him gently. 'Tell mother,' he said, faintly, 'that God sent you to take her place.' In a few moments the boy had passed away, and every man reverently stood with bared head, as with her hand in mine she quietly slipped from the room. Silently, tearfully, prayerfully I witnessed this scene when I was at the age of greatest susceptibility. On that day, made

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sad by the going out of a young life, in a rude, obscure shanty, I learned the deepest lesson of my life. On that day my ideal was changed from a woman of perfect features and faultless figure to one, who by the beauty of her soul and the touch of her life taught a whole community how to live like the Master."

How had the doctor's wife come by that grace and sweetness which helped her to see life at its true angle? That story may never be told this side eternity; and yet we may be sure that some time, somewhere, she herself had known the fashioning strokes of the hammer of God; and they had shaped and molded her very soul into the likeness of the Master she followed. That is the only way true beauty of character is ever wrought out.

The ring of the stonecutter's hammer and chisel always had a charm for me. I love to watch one of these workers as he takes the rough, imperfect stone from the quarry and patiently chips away the corners and brings out the beauty which his eyes could see while yet the rock lay in the rough. The blows seem hard; that is the only way to find the angel in the block. Every stroke makes me flinch, for I fear that the steel may cut too deeply

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and spoil the beautiful thing: but the hand which swings the hammer is sure and steady. Just at the right moment it will be stayed. So I watch until at last the cutting is all done, the rock is turned into a thing of perfect beauty, the stone is fitted for its place.

I am not really happy when God places me under his hammer. The bed of the anvil is so hard. How can I endure it? And these swift blows, coming again and again, how they hurt my soul! I shrink, I cry out in pain, through my shut lips, praying God in his mercy to stay his hand. It seems to me at last the work must be complete. Am I not indeed fit for the Master's use?

So, it may be, good Abraham of old cried to God that day when with the son of his heart he trod the stony steeps of Mount Moriah. When at first the message came to him, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon the mountain which I shall tell thee of"—then it must have seemed like the death knell of every long-cherished hope. But no cry escaped his lips.

God knew just how heavy the blows were;

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but he knew too just what Abraham needed to make him the father of the faithful, God's great example of faith for all time to come. Therefore he let them fall.

O, my Father, give me the grace to be still till thou hast wrought out in me thine own sweet will! Sharp may be the cutting of the chisel, heavy the blows of thy hammer, but I know they are sent in love. I am not alone; just by my side I see Jesus, my great Burden-Bearer. Ever between me and the stroke is his hand, the dear hand that was pierced. And some day I shall awake in his blessed likeness!

CHAPTER XIV

HONEY OUT OF THE ROCK

AWAY out on the border line of civilization a traveler met a woman at the station. She was to take him still farther from the world, to a little settlement where he was to meet a speaking engagement. She was neatly dressed, and when she spoke he could see that there had been a day when her life had been lived somewhere else than in that far western country. There was no need for haste, and they drove slowly across the quiet prairie, talking of many of the great things of life. It was plainly to be seen that she was a woman with a great dream in her heart, just as heaven was in her face.

"You surely must stay with us to-night," she urged. "I want you to see our home. It is such a lovely place. I wish everybody had as good a home."

Over and over again she spoke of this prairie home, and always in such glowing terms that the traveler longed to catch sight

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of the place, sure that there he might rest from his long journey and feast his eyes upon the splendors of this lovely place. More than once he found himself straining his eyes to catch sight of the house he was sure must soon rise upon his vision. In fancy he pictured it. He knew there would be a cheery, restful room awaiting him, with windows looking out toward the sunset. He did not doubt that there would be a man of big, brawny body and a handclasp like a vise waiting to welcome him.

The long ride ended at last, but instead of driving up a graveled walk to a comfortable home they turned in at a tiny house of sods. And in the doorway sat, not a stout-limbed frontiersman, but a poor, crippled husband, with face pale from suffering, and two or three little ones hovering about his chair. This was the home which was so charming to the woman who had met him at the station. He had not been there very long, though, before the minister knew that she was right. This was indeed a most delightful home, a home built up in the name of God and honored by him, a perfect little beauty spot in the midst of an otherwise desolate, wind-swept prairie.

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As long as he lived the visitor did not forget that sod house on the border. Now, he too wished that homes like that might be found everywhere, the wide world over. And he had long since come to see that the mother herself was the light and the center of all its loveliness.

THE BOYS AND THEIR MEMORY

And do you think the boys of that little house will ever forget their home on the frontier and the mother who made it so dear to them? Some day they will go out of their cramped sod house. Away they will go into the great world outside. But they will carry with them a great store of love begotten of love. Days will come by and by when they will push back from their desks and shut their eyes for a little while to think of that little earth-made home, with its narrow windows, that house made all radiant within by the mother who was its light and their joy. From the recollections of this home and the dear ones in it, they will go back to their work stronger and better to meet the hard things which lie on ahead.

It may be they do not now realize what a

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treasure they have in that humble home. It may seem to them a very narrow place in which to grow a big life. Youth has no scales with which properly to weigh the love of a good mother, no rule by which to measure the worth of a God-fearing home. Youth's eyes are turned away toward grander things; it dreams of castles and boundless estates and stores of gold.

But memory starts out with a big basket—she knows it will be needed. Day by day she drops into it some sparkling jewel, covering it with love's enfolding, until at last, when the years have slipped away and the heart grows faint with its striving, there is a glorious store awaiting the tired fingers which pull aside the curtain. How we do rejoice at the gathered treasures of the fast-flitting years! How thankful we are that Memory has been so faithful while we have been busy heaping up the things we thought so well worth while but which now seem like very baubles! Very poor and trifling do they appear now as we set them alongside the jewels we once placed so little store by. Now the sod home is a palace. Now the mother love is recognized as heaven's sweetest gift to

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men. God be thanked for the good home! Be it in city or wilderness, the home made for us by mother, mother with her love so rich, so kind, so patient, so forgiving, boundless as the ocean and a prayer ending only when life puts up the shutters.

WHAT LOVE CAN DO

In the Old Dominion a Christian father and mother had the joy of knowing that all the boys and girls of their home except one had come into the Kingdom. For that one the fires of prayer had burned brightly all through the years, but the parents slipped over the brink without seeing that one great hope fulfilled. So the years went on. The house on the old homestead was to be torn down to make way for a more modern dwelling. Once more all the boys and girls, now men and women grown, gathered about the family altar to pray their last prayer before the dear old room should be changed. Here father and mother had knelt with them in the days gone by. Did they not in fancy feel their presence now? Surely, angel forms must have been bending low over those praying men and women.

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Then one after another they prayed for the brother who was still outside the fold. There were tears on the cheeks of them all as they pleaded that he too might be won to the God of their fathers. And their prayers prevailed. The hallowed memories of the home, together with the pleading of the loved ones, touched the secret spring and set the fountain to flowing which never will be stayed this side eternity.

A minister who has now gone away to the house not made with hands says that he was once privileged to meet a woman whose rare loveliness made her the center of attraction for all who knew her. It was a joy to see her smile, for the secret of that smile was the beauty of soul it revealed. It was as if for one little moment she pushed open the door and let her soul shine out in all its purity and its glory. And this woman asked the minister to visit her in her home. "I want you to see my lovely boy," she smiled.

When at last the invitation could be accepted and the boy came into the minister's presence, the visitor could scarcely keep back a feeling of surprise, mingled with mirth, so awkward and so homely was the face and

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the form. Could this be the son of whom the woman had said, "I want you to meet my lovely boy"? Did the woman notice the man's expression of disappointment? If she did, she met it like a true mother. She placed her arm about the neck of the boy and drew him down beside her, kissing him proudly and smoothing his hair tenderly, the same vision of heaven shining in her face and from her eyes. The love of the mother seemed to make the freckled cheeks of the boy fairly glow. He reached up and caressed the loved face bent toward him, his eyes seeming to drink in something he saw there, something for which he craved with the most intense longing.

Years went by and in a far-distant city the minister went to hear a young man preach who was said to be awakening the whole country round about by the power of his eloquence and the fervor of the message he brought. Behold! it was the homely boy of the mother of the heavenly face!

When the sermon was over, he hastened to take the minister by the hand. His soul had been stirred to its depths by the power of the young man's discourse.

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"How could you preach such a sermon as that?" he questioned; and he knew the minister was right when he answered, "My mother loved it into me. If I ever do anything worth while, it will be because her life is being lived over in me."

HONEY IN THE RIVEN ROCK

The traveler in the Holy Land is often refreshed by honey which has been stored away by bees in the clefts of the rocks along the road. The way sometimes leads through sections that are painfully desolate. Few and far between are the trees and flowers; but over miles of lonely space the little workers of the sky and the sunshine bring their sweet argosies, toiling on, that some day the weary traveler, fainting by the roadside, may realize the better the meaning of the word spoken by David:

"He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."

All along life's way we may find that God has laid away for us some rare treasures. Often do we clamber over rock-bound roads. Life seems dreary. What is there to give us

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cheer? We wonder why we have been led along such a road as this, where no flowers bloom, no trees cast their friendly shadow. Then, lo! out of the very heart of the rock, honey trickles down—God's nectar for his way-worn children. Where a moment ago we thought there was only sand and barren cliff and hottest sunshine we now gather new life and joy and hope. We were expecting to find palm trees and vineyards and luscious fruits. What eyes had we for rifts in the rock? Sod-houses had little charm for us then, so tame and commonplace were they. But in a little while we shall see that the sod-house was the cradle for our finest dreams. There a queen held sway. On the throne was mother. Freckled faces there were made beautiful by the mother who held them between her hands and looked the love of her heart deep down into our own. Hearts as weak as water were made strong and fit for conquest, because mother loved into them her own dear self. The very rifts of the rock drip with honey for the man who will stop to take it.

O mother, whoever you are, make your home a little bit of heaven. It may be you are dreaming of fields of greater conquest.

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Never will holier service be given you than to make and keep your home sweet and pure and holy. So store it full of honey for the dear ones. They may not understand what you are doing just now, but the day will come when it will all be clear to them. Then for them the dearest spot in all the world will be the old home; and because mother made it so glorious they never will be satisfied until they go to see her in the other home, the Yonder Home of God.

CHAPTER XV

A SONG FROM THE TOP OF THE ROCK

"How bright these glorious spirits shine!
Whence all their bright array?"

DUNCAN MATHESON, coming from a lonely vigil by the side of a sick and wounded soldier of the Crimea, was plodding through the knee-deep mud toward a miserable stable, which was his only lodging place. His heart had been weighed down almost to the breaking by the scenes which came to his sight everywhere he might turn. War seemed to him to have no bright side. The heart of the man of God was oppressed, and in spirit he longed for home and the loved ones once more.

As if overwhelmed by the feeling that only beyond the blue of heaven is peace to be found, he took off his cap and turned his eyes upward. There the stars shone in a clear sky, so calm, so steady, so peaceful. The sight thrilled his very soul and brought to his tired heart a sense of rest and security he had not known all day long. Pressing on to the top

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of the hill, so that he might seem to be a little nearer to heaven and to God, he broke out into a hymn of the long ago.

"How bright these glorious spirits shine!
Whence all their bright array?"

With the song, a new hope came to him. He for the moment forgot the awful things about him, and plodded on through the mud to his gloomy quarters in the old barn. God and heaven were not so very far away, even on the field of Sebastopol!

He had not forgotten the spell of the night before, when, with the words of the dear old song running through his mind, his rounds brought him face to face with a soldier standing under the porch of a deserted house. The man's uniform was in tatters and his feet were fairly on the ground; but a light shone in his eyes which proved that, although war had served him hard, still he had kept something fine in his heart, some vision which helped him to rise above his present sorrowful state.

The minister stopped to speak a word with the veteran and soon had his story. Only the very night before, tired of body and sick of heart, bemoaning his bitter lot, the man had

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gone out with his gun, fully intending to make an end of his life. Then suddenly yonder hill rose to his sight, clearly defined in the starlight. While he stood there, for the moment entranced by the beauty of the scene, from the crest of the hill came to his ears the sound of a man's voice, lifted up in the words of a hymn. "I had heard it many a time in the homeland," the soldier said. "It carried me back to the old home, the Book and the stories mother used to tell me. You must have heard that hymn. 'How bright these glorious spirits shine!' Somehow as I listened a new spirit came over me and I could not keep back the tears. The wicked, rebellious thoughts vanished out of my mind. I am a better man to-day, saved by that blessed hymn from the top of that hill."

Never again did Duncan Matheson sing that hymn of the homeland that he did not thank the Father that it was given him to lift up his voice that night in its sweet melody, the melody which had led a soul back from darkness to light.

A NEW SONG

It had been given to the prophet Isaiah to

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look down the ages and see the Christ of God, "In whom," as he himself says, "my soul delighteth," under whose touch the bruised reed should never more be broken nor the smoking flax quenched; whose mission it should be to "open the eyes of the blind, to bring the prisoners out of the prisons and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-houses; for behold the former things are come to pass—before the new things spring forth I tell you of them."

No wonder this glorious revelation of the glory to be should so inspire the prophet that he should burst forth into a hymn of joy.

"Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up the voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains."

YOUR NEW SONG AND MINE

Upon every true lover of God and of his fellow men just now a peculiar service has come. As never before since the time to which

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the memory of man runneth not thither, the blight of trouble has fallen. The world is filled with those who weep. Some mourn because they know the sting of the desolate heart, some out of sympathy; and to so many the sky looks black and the prospect forbidding. We dread to take up the morning paper lest some new tragedy be spread out before us. It seems as if all the world is going about sadly, with crepe on its arm and a shadow in its heart, while prayers of intercession make the air heavy, prayers to God that his mercy may return to the sons of men.

In this moment of the world's Gethsemane have we forgotten the old promise in the vision of Isaiah? Do we not believe it is just as true as it was when he first said it, that the former things shall come to pass? God's own word! Brush the dust from the old Book. It has lain so long on the shelf unopened. Who knows but this awful neglect may be the reason why the world is bathed in crimson blood to-day? Open the Book again. "Behold, the former things are come to pass." God's love is still with us. It has been raining for days and the skies have been black and lowering, but down in the meadow the

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grass is dotted with daisies and poppies; yellow and purple and lavender are the blossoms which the raindrops have brought; all the earth is carpeted with emerald, the gift of the rain. And in a to-morrow soon to come we shall gather in the ears of corn, so heavy that they hang down for very richness, and apples rosy red will drop into the hand held up to receive them.

WHEN LIGHT CAME IN

Do you not know whole villages in which at certain seasons of the year all the houses are closed? The windows are covered with boards nailed over them to protect the glass. Very desolate seem these towns now as we pass along their silent streets. Not a gleam of light shines out across the winter's snow. The heart of the visitor is made lonely by the prospect.

There comes a day when from those very windows a friendly lamp sends out its cheery rays. The blinds are taken down. The dead leaves are raked up about the yards. All is bright once more with the laughter of boys and girls. Harp and piano and human voice do their best to drive out the shadows of yes-

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terday. Soon from end to end the little village is bright with light and beauty. From one cottage after another the lamps have sent out their scimitars of light to pierce the darkness. The glory of another summer has come. The winter is past; sunshine and happiness are here again!

In the world's abattoirs a vessel is set to catch the current of the lifeblood as it flows from the doomed creatures that come within its deadly pale. By and by those crimson drops, now changed and crystallized, come back to us in new form. We take them and out of their strength grow our most beautiful flowers, the yellowest of corn, the finest granaries of wheat—life blood turned into life-giving, joy-bringing harvest.

And in a little while, when men come back to their better selves, after pain has wrought out its purifying work; when carelessness and indifference and open sin have been wiped out in the red-hot crucible of war; when God shall see in the hearts of men—in your heart and mine—the sure signs of repentance and contrition, he will hasten to bring back the day of rejoicing. The lights which are now out will be brought in again. The shed blood

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will help us to grow the roses and the violets of a better life. Sorrow and sighing will flee away and hope rise to newer flights.

LIFT THE WINDOW HIGHER

A man I knew was sick unto death. Every morning fearing lest the light should be too bright in the room for his weakened eyesight, the one who cared for her husband would say, "Shall I not lower the shade just a little?" And always the answer would come back: "Raise it just as high as you can, sweetheart. I do love the light so." And when he began to mend a little, kind friends came in to see him. They knew the story of the lifted curtain and they did not sit down to look sad and sorrowful; they brought him smiles and fragrant flowers; they told him all the pleasant things they could. Thus they helped to woo him back to health.

The world to-day needs a cheery song—a song of the homeland, a song of hope and help and uplift. It is sick and tired of sin; it longs for the hymn which tells of God's forgiving love, his mercy for a repentant people. It is full of sorrow for a blighted and sin-cursed past; it is listening hard for the song in the

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night from the top of the rock which shall call it back to Jesus. And who shall sing that song? Are your feet and mine firmly on the Rock, so that we can do it? Does our faith lay hold upon the mountain path leading up to the city of God? Then it is for us to take up again the sweet old song of Isaiah: "Sing unto the Lord a new song!"

Somehow the name of the author has been dropped from the following lines; that will take nothing from their beauty, however. So let us pass them on, with a prayer that they may help and bless and cheer all who read them:

"When the outlook is dark, try the uplook!"

These words hold a message of cheer:
Be glad while repeating them over,
And smile when the shadows appear.
Above and beyond stands the Master,
He sees what we do for his sake;
He never will fail nor forsake us,
'He knoweth the way that we take.'

"When the outlook is dark, try the uplook!"

The uplook of faith and good cheer.
The love of the Father surrounds us,
He knows when the shadows are near.
Be brave, then, and keep the eyes lifted,
And smile on the dreariest day:
His smile will glow in the darkness;
His light will illumine the way."

CHAPTER XVI

ON THE ROCK FOUNDATION

THE builders of a great line of railway pushed their operations on successfully until they were almost within sight of the end. So far they had met with very few obstacles worthy of the name. All at once they found themselves face to face with what appeared to be an insuperable difficulty. A pile of gravel thrown from the cars disappeared in a night. Last night the material lay there in a great heap, ready for use the next day. In the morning it had dropped out of sight. Only a yawning cavity met their gaze.

Many more carloads of gravel were brought and dumped into the opening. All went down out of sight. The engineers drove heavy piles down twenty, thirty, forty, fifty feet in length, but the longest post failed to strike anything solid. It seemed as if the pit were indeed bottomless.

It was not feasible to change the line of the road. There was no way around. Now

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the contractors set themselves about the task before them in grim earnest. Whole train loads of stone, earth, and other material were brought and sent whirling down that rent in the garment of old mother earth. When these had gone out of sight, other train loads followed; and so the work went on for days and hope was nearly lost. Then the fight came to an end. Solid rock had been found at last.

BED ROCK

Those who built the capitol of one of our great States had well-nigh as difficult a task in finding a sure foundation for the giant structure. A rock foundation they must have; the building never would be safe otherwise. So on and on they dug through treacherous sand and unstable earth, never daring to rest until they came to bed rock. It was a day of rejoicing when at last they could touch something that would not give way and feel that they might now lay the lower walls of the capitol safely.

BUILDING WHERE NO LAND IS

Far to the southwestward the people of one of the islands awoke to the startling fact that

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they were being pushed by their own growth of population into the sea. Scarcely was there room for the men and women already on this narrow point of land, and children were being given them every year. What should they do? Stand there and be crowded into the sea? Some proposed that they might take ship and sail away to other lands. The love of home is strong, however, even with the dwellers of the sea. They shrank from venturing far from the place which had given them birth. But what could they do?

It must be that God gave them the way out of their trouble. With a determination well worthy of any people they set themselves to the task of making their island larger. Sounding the sea until they found a coral reef, they built a raft and towed it out to the ridge. There they anchored it near the middle of the bed of coral. Did they not lift up their hearts in thanksgiving that the unseen toilers of the deep had laid for them so secure a foundation in a day when they knew not what was to be their future need?

From the outer rim of the reef, great pieces of coral were torn and carried to the raft. Slowly it sank to the top of the rock, and this

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was the framework of the new island. It was home-building in the very bosom of the deep. More fragments of coral, more earth from the mainland, more material of any and of every kind was brought, so that inch by inch the new land was connected with the mother island; and the day came when the people gained their point and drove back the water, so that they could move over to the new home. There houses were built, trees were set out, crops were grown. God crowned the efforts of those simple people of the great hope. There they live, as if held in the palm of the Almighty, safe in their house built upon a rock.

THE MASTER'S TWO PICTURES

What a maker of pictures was the Master! Other teachers of the past had taught in a language hard to understand. They took a kernel of truth and so wrapped it about with mystery that the mind of the common folk could grasp it but feebly. Men wondered what could be the meaning of the doctrines which were taught them, wondered and went away with thirst for truth not satisfied. The Great Teacher was the first to meet the yearn-

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ing of the human heart. Jesus spoke in a straightforward, clear, distinct, earnest way. He had no time for mysteries. Only a handbreadth of time had been granted him in which to tell the most wonderful story that mortal had ever heard. What a relief it must have been to the people who had so long listened helplessly and gone on hopelessly, like a ship feeling its way through a dense fog! Now they could understand. They knew what Jesus meant when he spoke to them about the trees and the fields, the crops and the flowers. They had felt in their own lives the whisperings of nature. How it inspired them when the Master wove these simple things into messages of life! Who ever before had thought of likening the growth of the things in nature to the building of character?

The very summit of the teaching of Jesus was reached that day when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. That was his masterpiece. Nothing like it had ever been known. No creation of man has since equaled it. None ever will. It was indeed revolutionary. It struck right at the root of everything in life. It came as a new code of conduct, an original plan for the building of life, individual, politi-

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cal, national. Not even yet have men come to accept that matchless epitome of principles. Not that it is not plain enough. Those who heard it then knew what Jesus meant; we know to-day. The trouble ever has been, is now, and must be till men give it up, the pride and selfishness of the human heart. It will not do as well as it knows. We are too headstrong, too bent upon seeking our own selfish interests to bring our lives into subjection to the laws promulgated by Christ. We know that life built on the plan of Jesus is the true, the well-rounded life; but we keep on building according to our own notions. We know that there can never be peace or good will among men on earth until we lay down the weapons of our warfare and say: "Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus. We yield ourselves and all we have and are to thee." But we keep on trying to please ourselves, to get everything we can, no matter to whom it belongs, to hate those who hate us, to wreak vengeance upon those who injure us and to wonder why we are never happy.

ON THE SAND

Jesus saw that this would be so. He was

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aware that men would always be divided into two great classes. A great rock cannot be rolled from the hillside into a stream and the current not be changed, one part to sweep away to the left, the other to swing out to the right. When the man of the brawny arm sets his wedge into the heart of the oak and strikes it hard enough and long enough, a cleft will be made. Some of those who heard Jesus would stand the test; some would go down before the trial of their faith. It would be so to the end of time.

That there might be no possible doubt as to the meaning of what he had been saying, and to serve as a most impressive warning for all time, toward the close of his sermon, the Master drew two word pictures of striking force and beauty. Think of them for a moment.

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

Builded upon a rock! Surely, they under-

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stood that Jesus was the Rock. Life with its corner stone laid upon that Rock never could be shaken. It would be safe amid the storms of the ages. Surely, men would make haste to build upon that foundation. Ah, if only they would! But Christ knew there would be souls which would rebel and say, "I will not." How well he knows the hearts of men! Listen as he lays with faultless touch the colors on that other picture:

"And every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

"Great was the fall of it." Ah, what becomes of the poor, puny will of man now? O Christ, thou knowest the peril of the soul! Down, down, down it goes, because it wills to go. The Rock was there, and also there the shifting sands. Men might build where they would. They chose the sands, and so they are choosing still. In all the round of human thinking there is no darker tragedy than this, that men might build their lives on the Rock,

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but they prefer to lay their foundation stones upon the sand. So they go whirling away with the rapids of sin, crushed, wind-swept, tempest-tossed—men and nations lost in the maelstrom of evil, because they will not live up to the teachings of the Christ of Galilee.

It seems so easy to build on the sand. No digging deep for a sure foundation is necessary; just lay the corner stone on the top and go on with the superstructure. So much time is saved. Cross cuts to success in business; a bit of trickery in making a deal; white lies that soon come to slip glibly from the tongue; passing the Book by in the morning and going to bed at night too tired to think of it; taking the Sabbath day as the time to read up the magazines or to post the books that have gotten a bit behind in the pressure of the week; aye, just a smile when God's sure time of reckoning is mentioned—these are the things which tempt the life-builder to turn away from the Rock and choose the treacherous sand. Then comes the crash. The winds begin to howl. The floods sweep about the soul, which is built too close to the edge of death. Just there, within the reach of us all is the Rock that standeth sure. Why not make heaven

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safe when we may? The house falls, because no such house can stand. God will not let it stand.

“I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet, he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

“The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming.”

So the sands slip away beneath our feet!
So the very ground crumbles under the feet
of armies and of nations and of world powers,
plunging them into the blackness of despair,
“Because ye will not! Ye will not listen and
obey!”

THE ROCK OF AGES

But think once again. “It fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”

Thank God there is a Rock which cannot be moved! There can be a building which wind, nor storm, nor tempest blast can move! Praised be his name that there is safety in the Rock Foundation! Give us the hearing ear, O Christ, and make us willing to plant our feet

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where the pelting of the storm, the raging of the flood, the sweeping of the winds will never disturb our habitation. There, firmly grounded, we will laugh at the tumult raging about us!

“Build ye on the Rock foundation,
And thy house shall surely stand!
When the storm brings desolation
To the house built on the sand.

“Build ye on the Rock foundation,
Build with purpose true and brave;
Build a glorious habitation,
Strong to shelter, strong to save!

“Build ye on the Rock foundation,
Corner stone of wondrous love!
In the day of exultation
Thou shalt dwell with Christ above!

“Build ye on the Rock foundation,
On the Rock that standeth sure;
On the Rock of God’s salvation
That forever shall endure!”

(Mrs. C. E. Breck.)

CHAPTER XVII

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST!

WHAT a chill comes over the heart when one feels that the earth is slipping from under one's feet!

A little way out from one of our Eastern cities, the country loses itself in a low, swampy morass. No man who knows the treacherous nature of the soil ever ventures when in his right mind into this place. Crazed with drink, however, a young man one night started for home through the darkness. He lost his way when he came to the outskirts of the city and wandered about until he was too tired to go any farther. Sinking down just where he was, he fell asleep, unconscious of the danger threatening him.

How long he slept no one knows. With a start he awoke. The first impression which came over him was that he must be freezing to death there all alone. His lower limbs were numb. When he tried to move them he was

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startled to find that they were caught as if in a vise. He could not stir either foot! Then the terrible conviction swept over him that he was fast in the ooze of the swamp. In vain he struggled to release himself. The harder he tried to lift himself from his horrible position, the deeper he sank into the mire. Lower and lower his body sank until the slime was breast high. Fear had by this time thoroughly sobered him and he realized his peril. He trembled from head to foot and great drops of sweat stood out on his face. Soon his head and shoulders were the only parts of his body that were above the water and mud. A minute more and the mire was up to his neck. With all his might he shouted for help! Each moment he was becoming more and more exhausted, and still caught in the grip of that awful death he gave himself up for lost. But God had his plans for that man's life. On the night wind the sinking man's cry was borne to the ear of one who happened to be in the vicinity, and led on by the sound of the ever-weakening voice, the stranger made his way into the swamp and succeeded in pulling the unhappy man out to firmer ground—saved when he was slipping down to death!

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST!

Peter knew something like this that day when he set out to walk upon the waves of the Sea of Galilee. Very bravely he planted his footsteps on the tossing billows in the beginning. Faith sang a cheering song in his heart. Out yonder was the Master. Had not he called to his servant, "Come!" in response to the disciple's challenge, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water"? And the answer had come so quickly and so assuringly that it seemed to Peter that nothing could happen to him on the way. For a little while all went well. What if the winds did roar and the sea beneath his feet was lashed into a foam by the storm? He was on the way to Jesus. Let the tempest howl! Let the waves rock! His eyes were not on the billows, but away out there on the dear face of the Master. All seemed well.

LOSING THE FAR LOOK

Then happened what seemed a moment ago to Peter the impossible. When he was almost within reach of the Lord he lost heart. Did he turn his eyes away from the face of the Master? He began to go down. Ankle deep, knee deep, the waves sweeping upward as if

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to smite him in the face. No longer did he see the calm face of the Christ. His eyes were filled with the mist of the storm. The rushing of the storm shut out the sound of the sweet voice calling, "Come!" The howling of the wind drowned everything but the fear of Peter. In a frenzy of terror he cried, "Lord, save me!" When faith lost its grip his feet had been washed from their foundation.

Forgetting the far look! Ah! that is the danger with us all to-day. Men and nations are groping about in the darkness everywhere—everywhere save where Jesus is. We are struggling for something upon which to plant our feet. The old foundations seem to be slipping, or already to have slipped, until good men everywhere are wondering what is to be the end of it all. Faith staggers. It is a testing time for the souls of us all. Is there anything sure anywhere?

LOSING SIGHT OF JESUS

In a most thoughtful editorial published not long ago in the *British Weekly*, the writer when speaking of conditions in England before the breaking out of the great European war, asks, "Is it not true that before the war

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST!

we were losing Christ out of our national life?" This question he goes on to answer in such language as this: "A steady drift was carrying us away from our true goal. We were forgetting God, and what that means, we are beginning to understand. . . . A quiet atheism was the temper of the times in many circles. There were portents of monstrous growth. The very foundation truths of morality were ridiculed by a cynicism as putrid, profane, and heartless as any that ever has appeared in the world. A very acute observer of our time says that the great characteristic of the last ten or twenty years was restlessness. We did not find and we did not seek true rest. All this means that Christ was knocking at the door in vain, as of old."

While there are some signs of a reassuring nature, the editor declares that "there is not that urgency and intensity of prayer that we need before we can be very hopeful. Nor is there the spirit of humiliation which befits us in our present state. Say whatever we will, the sins of the nation have been great, and it may well be, as Sir David Beatty has said, that we shall not begin to gain victory till we are brought to our knees in supplication. It is

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with God we have to do. We may multiply our munitions and our soldiers. We may call in new counselors and leaders, and yet nothing will avail us if we leave Christ out. He is the Captain of our salvation. It is under him that we must attain victory. . . . We cannot live without Christ. . . . There is no hope for us except in humiliation and prayer and faith. 'Come and let us return unto the Lord.' "

CHRIST THE ROCK

And it is true, as true for all the world as for England. Jesus Christ is the only cure for the wounds of the world. Men may seek peace and rest everywhere else; at last they must come back to him.

Moses knew the heart of the people of Israel better than they knew it themselves. From the red-hot ovens of the brickkilns of Egypt even up to the border lines of the promised land he had done his best to help them to understand that in Jehovah, and in him alone, was their strength and their peace and their salvation. At times it seemed as if they felt this to be true. Then they returned from their foolish wanderings for a little

THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST!

while to walk in the statutes of God. Soon sin came back again with its lure and everything seemed lost again. The heart of the great leader might well have been weak within him.

Well on toward the end of his storm-swept career, after God had appeared to his servant at the door of the tabernacle and told him that soon the call home would come to him, Moses made haste to bring to an end his writing of the Book of the Law. When the precious parchments had been finished and safely laid away in the side of the ark of the covenant, Moses wrote a wonderful song and taught it to the children of Israel, for his heart could not give up its longing for them. Still hope sang its song in his heart, that, after all, the best might come to them, even while he trembled when he thought of what must be the shadows through which they might pass before they came up out of sin's crucible. How that song must have rung in their ears on the day when Moses first sang it! How its echo must have come back in the years which came afterward, when all the prophecies of their Great Commander had come to pass!

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak;

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and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distill as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."

They had come over a rock-strewn road; and yet, as they looked back over it now, they could not help realizing that God had ever been to them a sure Rock of defense. When they had been proud of heart and willful; when dangers had beset their path, so that the very earth seemed to be slipping from under them; when sin had dug the foundation stones from the house of their habitation; when they had seemed to be tottering swiftly to destruction; when the wilderness way had been long and hope was flickering low in its socket; when to follow the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night longer appeared to be a mockery, then, if they but turned away from their headstrong course and planted their feet once more on the Rock, all had been well with them. The shadows

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fled; hope came back with a song that was sweeter than any it ever had sung; in their dreams they caught the vision of the hilltops of the land that was soon to be.

DRINKING OF THE ROCK

Blessed be the touch of the Rock to our weary feet! Why are we so easily deceived? "I am the Rock!" So whispers sin, and its voice is so alluring! We drop all else and hasten to take our places on the deceptive foundation. But it is so slippery! Before we know it we are hurled head foremost into the bottomless pit. "Trust yourself to me. I will hold you safely"—it is the voice of passion, and we leap to its crimson embrace, only to find that we have trusted sinking sand. So it is with pride and selfishness and ambition and willful desire and worldly pleasure—all nothing but rotten stone!

Then we open the Book and turn to the glorious words of Paul. He is speaking of the days when the fathers were under the cloud, passing out of bondage into freedom. It was a day of testing, of sea and wilderness, of hunger and thirst; of doubt and fear; of fiery serpents and thorn-set road: still in this

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time of stress, "They did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

THE LORD'S ONE FOUNDATION

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Man is always laying foundations. There was a time when this was not so. Once man did not know the need of a house that had foundations. Then he slept out under the stars, looking up into the face of God who came down in the cool of the day to talk with his child. That was a happy day. Then man was pure and care-free, walking with his hand in the hand of God and holding sweet communion with him.

Then something came into the heart of man. The spirit of evil flung its wings over the very paradise of God. Its black shadow never has fully lifted since, but it is lifting! Man began to be afraid—yes, afraid of his best, his truest Friend. Because it was against this Friend that he had sinned, man saw something in the pure eyes which looked upon him, something that never had been in the eyes of God before.

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Sorrow? God is always grieved when his children go astray. Pity? Surely, he does pity you and me when we bring upon ourselves the penalty of sin. And still, more than sorrow, more than pity showed in the face of the Holy One when man met him face to face. The flame of justice now glowed where once only love had rested on the heavenlit countenance.

And that gaze was more than man could endure. It burned itself deep into his very soul and seared like a red-hot iron. It blazed out now in a sword before which man fled in terror, staying not in his flight until the gates of the garden swung to behind him and paradise was lost. Fig leaves now, stitched together with thorns, so that man might hide himself from the sorrowful, pitying, stern eyes of his Maker. Houses now, to keep off the chills of the night and to afford protection from enemies never known in the past. At first a few branches broken from the trees and bent together at the top; then slender poles covered with the skins of the poor creatures of field and forest which God had made and brought to man that he might name them. That day these poor, dumb things crept up

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to lick the hand of the man who loved them; but now they trembled when they saw him coming, for he had in his hand an instrument with which to take the life he could not give back. They knew now that his hand was to be against them. Sin had done it—now man had become a murderer. This was the awful change wrought in the soul of man by the fall.

But the skin-covered tent was not strong enough to do all man must have done and he sought something more secure: timber from the wood, rocks out of the quarry, brick baked as hard as stone, and all girt about with bars and bands of steel, so that man might be safe from the penalty of his sin.

And before man learned what fire and flood and frost will do, he placed his house on things which would not last. The earth, shifting sands, stakes driven down into the ground—these were the things upon which he built and wondered when he saw how quickly they were all swept away. Could it be true that every force of God had been turned against him? It seemed to him so, for the house he reared so hopefully last night lay all in ruins in the morning. Deeper he drove his posts down into the earth. He dug until he came to the

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rock; tent and tabernacle passed away. The temple, the castle, the rock fortress became man's habitation.

Safe now? Ah! man never has yet been able to dig so deep nor to lay his foundation so securely that God in his own time would not shake it into dust. Nor can man ever build his home anywhere on the face of this old earth and be sure that it will stand the touch of God which is certain to be laid upon it. He may climb the mountain and make his home among the cliffs; he may go down into earth's deepest caverns and think he is safe there; still God will find him and tear down the things he has built. Never until man lays his foundations in the Almighty; only when he accepts the atonement wrought out by Jesus Christ and becomes reconciled to God; only when the new heaven and the new earth come down will man come into the joy of the city that hath foundations, the mansion prepared for him by the Christ, the home which cannot be moved throughout all eternity.

And all this is just as true of the soul of man as it is of the things which are seen. Ever since man lifted the latch of the door

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and stepped out of paradise he has been trying to lay foundations for his soul. What a miserable failure he has made of it! Just when he has thought he had built most securely, God has put out his finger and all his little huts have crumbled into nothing. Not a single form of religion born out of the mind of man has ever stood, and none ever can stand but for a night!

“Other foundation can no man lay.” Who says this? God whispered it into the ear of his child that day when he stood shivering on the world’s threshold, and he never has forgotten it, nor can he forget it as long as time shall last. He may try to put it away out of his mind, so that he may follow the will-o’-the-wisp of his own imaginings; pride may keep him from acknowledging its truth; ambition may stifle its wooings, but God’s word is sure: “Other foundation can no man lay.”

But a foundation is laid. O thought of wondrous beauty! “*Is laid!*” Not “will be laid” in some dim, far-off time, too late, perhaps, for you and me ever to see it; but now, now and forever. “*Is laid!*” No need to worry; God has done it. His purpose stands and will stand until the trump shall sound

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and time shall be no more. "Is laid!" and laid in Christ Jesus.

When all the puny bough houses reared by man's hands have been tossed into forgetfulness; when the wretched religions of his devising have been tried and proven worthless; when at last man comes to know and to confess that in the name of Jesus alone is there salvation, then, and not until then, will trouble flee away and heaven come down to earth once more.

Blessed Lord Jesus, in thee is my hope laid. I have been very willful. I have tried to sing a song of life to the tinkling of my own cymbals. Now let me put all these poor things aside and take up the harp of thine own making. Nay, let my own soul be the harp. Touch thou its strings with thy loving fingers. Teach thou my lips to sing the praise of thy dear name. I have stooped to the sands and dreamed that the stones I placed upon them for the habitation of my soul would outlast the storms. Now I see what a wreck I have made of it. Be thou my Rock Foundation. All sapphire and jasper and emerald, all topaz, all beryl and amethyst will then be the walls of my soul. Its gates will be set with

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pearls, its streets will be paved with pure gold. It will need no light of sun nor moon. Stars need not shine upon it, for the glory of God shall be its clear shining, and the Lamb shall be the Light thereof forever and forever!

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall.
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all!

"Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him Lord of all!

"Let every kindred, every tribe,
On this terrestrial ball,
To him all majesty ascribe,
And crown him Lord of all!

"O! that with yonder sacred throng
We at his feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song,
And crown him Lord of all!"

(Perronet.)

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